



THE ROMANCE OF POPULAR CULTURE

SCRAPS OF MATCHBOOKS, TATTERS OF TABLOIDS, snatches of sheet music, patches of wallpaper, ads hawking cafés to lightbulbs to ladies' unmentionables – Picasso's Cubist creations overflow with stuff raided from popular culture (figs. 255 and 314). Raucous and sometimes raunchy, they jubilate, as Robert Rosenblum put it, in "the new imagery of the modern world."¹ Within the context of French avant-garde painting, the move was heretical and exciting; this popular dimension of Picasso's Parisian images has been vividly explored. What has not yet been recognized is the extent to which Picasso's romance with the popular began in childhood (beyond his love of bullfighting, which has long been noted), and the extent to which his popular images responded to his cultures. Each of his cultures celebrated the "popular," but understood it differently. For years before Paris, he engaged these different conceptions, these vibrant possibilities. Picasso, who dared insert the ephemera of popular culture into his Cubist works, came to Paris from a place where artists regularly made use of popular themes and forms. Picasso – who dared include untraditional materials, even real objects in his collages and constructions – came from a place where artists regularly painted on untraditional supports and added real elements to their images. In his most radical Cubist pictures, and often with surprising specificity, Picasso drew on the popular cultures of his childhood. He recast their materials, themes, genres (such as *barros*), and associations (such as the outlaw and the commodity), as he re-created ideas and a kindred magical aesthetic from the most modern, most outlaw, most commodified popular medium of his new Parisian world.

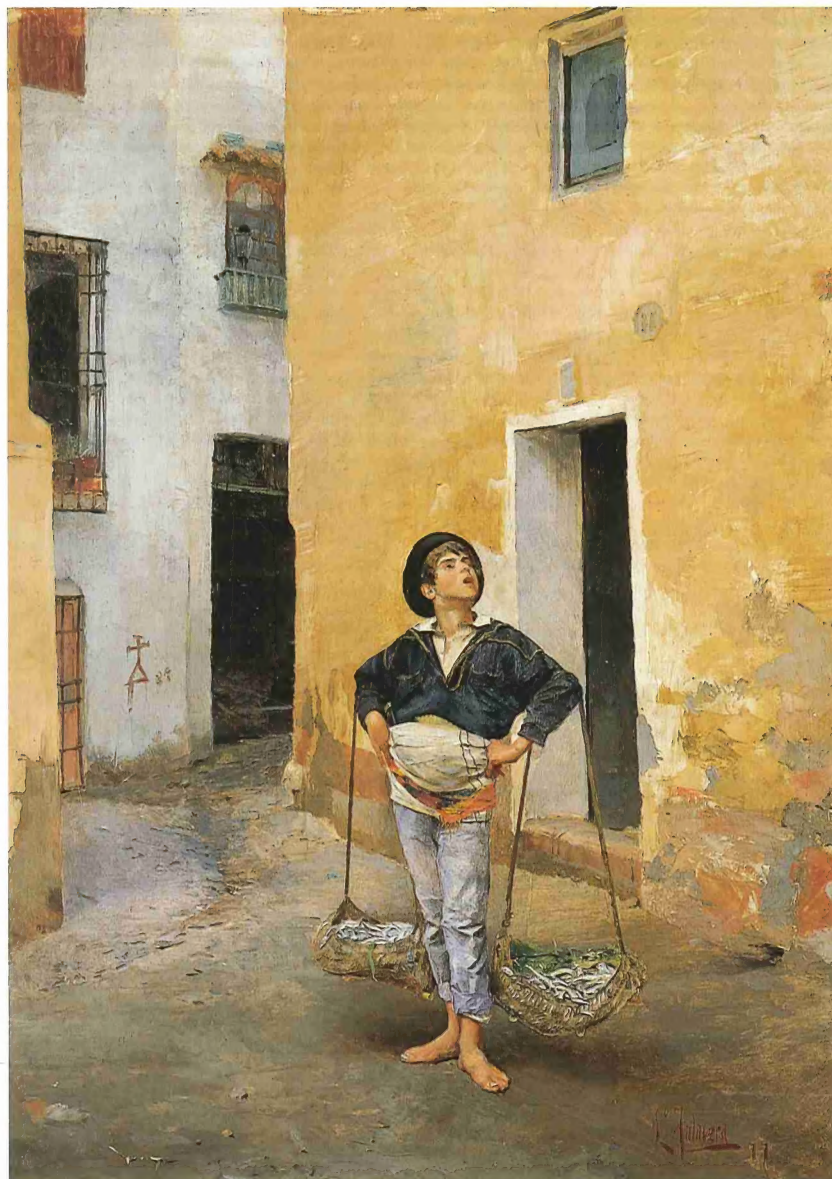
COSTUMBRISMO AND BARROS: EL PUEBLO COMMODIFIED

As addressed earlier, Malagueño painters celebrated *costumbrismo*. For a burgeoning bourgeois market, they painted popular Andalusian subjects and scenes, the players of *tauromaquia*, as well as urban workers like the straw vendor (fig. 19), with its bit of visible shop sign ("RIA") behind and the *cenachero* (fig. 113), considered since 1877 to be the emblem of Málaga, with his characteristic broad sash, cropped jacket, rolled-up trousers, and large suspended baskets often glistening with fish. They portrayed *el pueblo* without a trace of hostility, without the slightest recognition of the economic and social hardships of her people. With their luscious colors and often delicate facture, they fashioned emblems of denial – a fantasy of grace and universal harmony. Rather than restrict themselves to canvas, they sometimes painted palettes as well as fans and tambourines, often to be given out as presents or prizes, festooning them with *majas*, beribboned guitars, and cascades of flowers.²

Malagueño sculptors also explored popular subjects and forms. Malagueños described the medium of sculpture in terms of a tired polarity – between the "romantic" and "classical" modes – the former, as in Rafael Gutiérrez de León's *Marqués of*

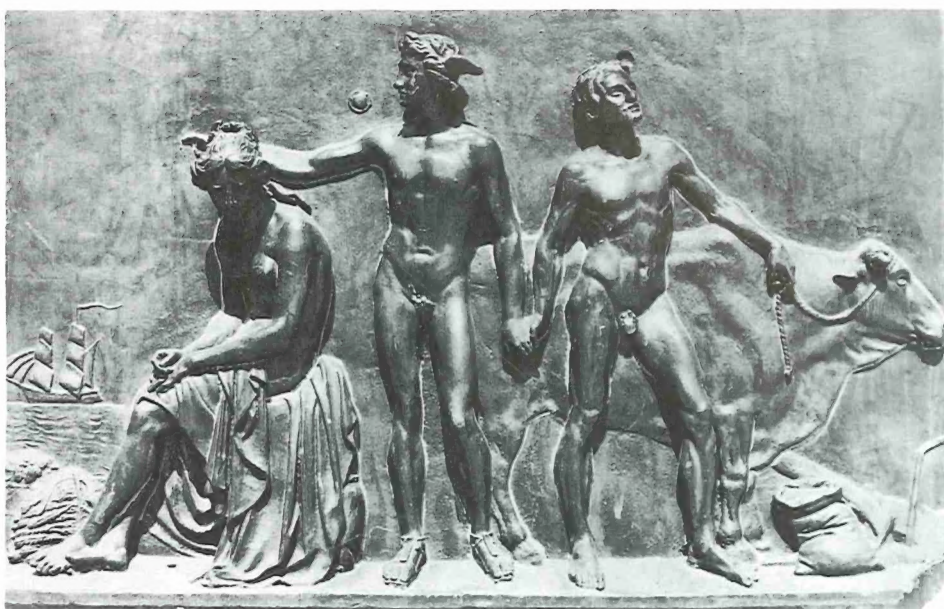
112 José Cubero Aranda, *Guitarist*, second half of the 19th century, painted terracotta and metal (wire) strings, Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares, Málaga.

113 Leoncio Talavera (1851–1878), *El cenachero*, 1877, oil on canvas, 52 × 36 cm., Ayuntamiento de Málaga.



Paniega (1888, fig. 114), with his piercing eyes, dashing mustache, and a panoply of medals; the latter as in José Vilches's *Allegorical Relief of Commerce, Agriculture, and Livestock* (1880s, fig. 115), a bas-relief inspired by neo-classicism and Winckelmannian precepts, with its heroic male nudes striking classical poses.³ But the putatively opposed sculptors tended to work in both genres – despite their ostensible ideological differences, the distinctions between them blurred.

Both Gutiérrez de León and Vilches practiced another genre, called *barros*. Viewed as the most realistic of art forms, they were praised by many as the best, and were viewed as the visual art form most truly indigenous to Málaga (even if the genre ultimately derived from Naples). Small and often full of piquant energy (in contrast to the stilted sculptures noted above), polychromed fired clay *barros* represent *costumbrista* characters or scenes: smugglers and *cenacheros*, the players of *tauromaquia* in full regalia, *majas* and *majos* preening or playing the guitar (fig. 112). They evoke



the romance of *el pueblo* in all its color and its glory. Two extraordinary works, by José Cubero Aranda, depict an old blind woman with a stick and a blind man strumming a guitar (figs. 116 and 117). Yet even here, the effect is poignant, not aggressive. (*Barros* subjects, as in Naples, originally were *presepi*, figures from holy crèche scenes, but were secularized to *costumbrista* themes in the late eighteenth century.⁴)

Barros first were made in Málaga in the mid-eighteenth century. Production accelerated throughout the nineteenth century and reached an apex by its end, in the work of Rafael and Antonio Gutiérrez de León, Francisco Muzo, and José Cubero, who made most of the fragile statuettes that remain. Despite the different sculptors and the passing of time, their appearance and themes remain remarkably consistent throughout the nineteenth century, and into the first years of the next.

Beyond their "realistic" style and their brilliant colors, *barros* often were adorned with real elements – real fringe for a horse's decoration, real tassels on a smuggler's boots, real metal wires for the strings of a guitar, real rope in a horse's mouth, real wood for a blind woman's stick. These elements recall the real garments, the real flowers, and the real gems that adorned the sacred *imágenes*, the holy polychromed wood statues. They wore wigs and eyelashes of lustrous hair, their parted lips revealed glistening ivory teeth, their cheeks sparkled with crystal tears. Humble materials were used too. Some Christs, including two of the Christs closest to Picasso's house, were bound with real rope – the *Cristo de la Humildad* from the Iglesia de la Merced, and the *Jesús de la Humillación y del Perdón* from the Iglesia de Santo Domingo – rope wrapped like a noose around their neck and hands, as it was around *Jesús de la Puente del Cedrón*, who was tormented by horribly realistic executioners, including "El Berrugueta" (the Warty One), named for the gigantic warts upon his ugly face.⁵ All of these literally real elements are mimetically motivated: within the "artistic" context, they remain and read as themselves. Their literal reality enhances the fictive reality of the *imágenes'* realist style, as they powerfully heighten a sense of sacred reality.

Barros were distinctive for another reason. Even though proper sculptors such as Gutiérrez de León often made and exhibited them in regional exhibitions, *barros* were viewed as artisanal, even commercial. They were described as manufactured. They were made in *fábricas* (factories) and were advertised. Multiples were made of the same work, the same form, then painted by hand in slightly different ways, for example, with a different pattern of different colored stripes for a jacket. Or the

114 (above left) Rafael Gutiérrez de León, *Marqués de la Paniega*, 1888, bronze, 90 × 62 × 35 cm., Museo de Bellas Artes, Málaga.

115 (above right) José Vilches, *Allegorical Relief of Commerce, Agriculture, and Livestock*, 1880s, from the monument to M.A. Heredia, Málaga.



116 (above left) José Cubero Aranda, *Old Blind Man Strumming a Guitar*, second half of the 19th century, painted terracotta, Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares, Málaga.



117 (above right) José Cubero Aranda, *Old Blind Woman with Stick*, second half of the 19th century, painted terra cotta and metal (wire) strings, Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares, Málaga.

sculptor would make subtle variations on the same theme, slightly altering the angle of an arm, a leg, a head, then making multiples of the new version (figs. 118 and 119). Archival records remain of sales of *barros*, with the range of prices, often described in terms of their subjects and colors. A catalogue from 20 December 1891 of the Almacenes Temboury, for example, lists a range of "Andalusian types," such as a "*maja* with mantilla and fan," "*toreros* dancing *sevillanas*," "smugglers, with a cape or smoking," "Flamenco dancer," "a *tuerto*" (one-eyed person).⁶

Rafael Gutiérrez de León, the first professor of modeling and casting adornments at the Academia de San Telmo, where Picasso's father would teach, also made sacred *imágenes*. Like his son Antonio Gutiérrez de León, who succeeded his father after his premature death, he "governed" the academic education of sculpture in Málaga, teaching students, for example, to learn from the Antique. They also belonged to a dynasty of *barros* makers:⁷ at the San Telmo they trained artisans, smelters, and ceramicists for the "industry of reproductions."⁸ School of Málaga painting, of course, also was resolutely commercial; and artists often made copies of their own or other artists' works.⁹



118 José Cubero Aranda,
Contrabandista on Horseback,
second half of the 19th century,
painted terracotta, rope and
upholstery fringe, Museo de Artes y
Costumbres Populares, Málaga.



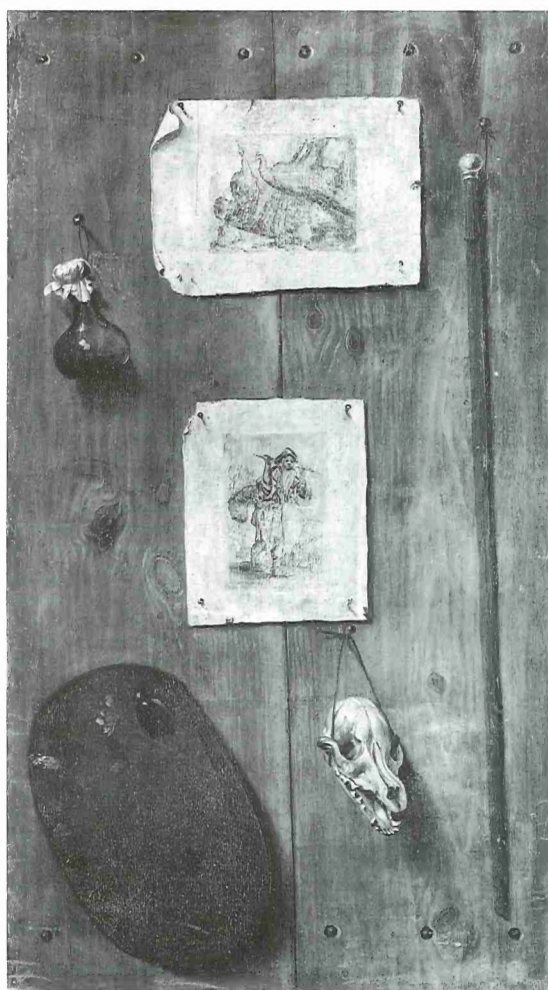
119 José Cubero Aranda,
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In addition to being bought and enjoyed by Malagueños, in particular the bourgeoisie (the “cultivated” tended to prefer the neo-classical idiom), *barros* became a favored commodity of export, especially with Britain and British travelers, from Francis Carter (1772), John Carr (1811), Captain Cook (Samuel Edward Widdrington, 1834), to Richard Ford (1847), and beyond.¹⁰ Ford even asserted that Málaga’s “chief” art, “if art it can be called, is the making [of] terra cotta images of *Majos*, *Contrabandistas*, and local costumes.”¹¹ In part because of the excellent quality of the native clay, there had been a great ceramic industry in Málaga at the time of Moorish domination; the *barro* industry revived this, and Málaga became the principal center of production.¹²

For their subjects, *barros* makers drew on images published in such works as *Colección de trajes de España, tanto antiguos como modernos* (1791, with nineteenth-century versions), *Costumbres andaluzas*, and *Álbum malagueño*, as well as magazines (such as *Ilustración*) and prints of *pliegos de oficios* (like the French *Cris de Paris*). The printed images, like the *barros*, emphasized the distinctive costume of each respective player – the dashing cape, wide fabric sash, bolero jacket, or medallioned embroidery.

Barros picture a panoply of outlaws: swashbuckling smugglers and *bandoleros* (highwaymen), often on horseback, often smoking cigarettes or cigars, often packing a range of weapons – knives, pistols, blunderbusses. Such images keyed into a Romantic trope, which glorified the law-breaker who flaunted conventions and, like the matador, lived fearlessly in great danger. They also represented a contemporary Malagueño reality. Since the Napoleonic occupation, economic hardships had generated a brisk contraband trade all over Spain; but the smugglers flourished particularly in Andalucía, goaded on by poverty, sheltered by the mountains. Highwaymen flourished. Some began as smugglers, some early on in the century began as guerrillas against the French, some were hunted, unjustly, by the law for crimes they did not commit, others hid in the mountains, waiting to rob and pillage or murder unsuspecting travelers or unfortunate villagers. Skilled with horses, flamboyant in dress, they terrorized some, even as they were heralded for their galantry toward women and their generosity toward the poor.¹³ A notorious *bandolero*, Luis Muñoz García, known as “El Bizco de Borge” (the Cross-Eyed Man from Borge, just outside Málaga), led a deadly band, gaining renown for assassinations, his spectacular marksmanship, his flamenco song, his allure with women, and his longterm flight from the Guardia Civil, who finally gunned him down in a firefight in 1889.¹⁴ While *barros* makers and their patrons delighted in the delicious outlaw status of the *contrabandista* and *bandolero* and while traveling Malagueños may have feared them, in the end, as *barros* images they were tamed – rendered small, safe, charming, picturesque. *Barros* were transgressive only to the extent (which, in the end, was not at all) that they depicted outlaws. To someone from Málaga, sticking real objects on an image was not transgressive in the least; in fact, in catalogue after catalogue, it was not even mentioned.

The dance between “art” and “reality” in some *barros* – where a real wooden branch can “grow” art of a sculpted, painted rock – recalls earlier Andalusian *trampantojos* (*trompe-l’œil*), where painters “realistically” rendered the different optical and physical properties of objects, with uncanny virtuosity. As academic sculptors also made *barros*, so academic painters also made *trampantojos* – oil paintings august enough, however, to be included in major collections. In the seventeenth century Marcos Correa,¹⁵ a member of the Academia de Pintura Sevillana, “nailed” an animal’s skull, a translucent glass vial, a painter’s palette, prints or drawings onto *trompe-l’œil* wooden slats (*faux bois*) with *trompe-l’œil* shadow-casting nails (fig. 120). Pedro de Acosta “pasted” or “nailed” an array of ordinary objects, some indus-

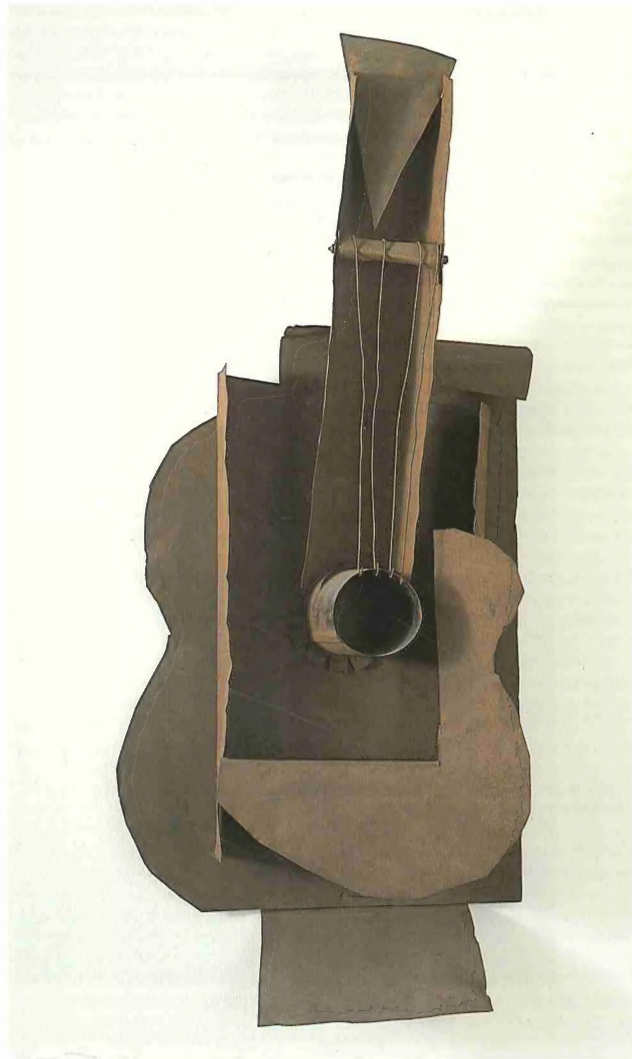


120 Marcos Correa,
Trampantojo, 17th century, oil on
canvas, 99 × 55 cm., Courtesy of
the Hispanic Society of America,
New York.

trially produced, some of which read like advertisements – letters, ledgers, drawings, engravings, playbills, ripped-out pages from books, musical instruments, glass flasks, weapons, the odd smoked fish. These often were affixed in rectilinear configurations, which play against the vertical joinings of the planks, and suggest a grid. Three of Acosta's *trampantojos* (one dated 1755) are at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid.¹⁶ It is certainly conceivable that Picasso would have known of these images, either when he lived in Andalucía, when he visited there later, or when he studied at the San Fernando.

As *barros* mixed prosaic objects into art, and as the fine arts were taught inextricably in the context of industrial applications, so paintings in Málaga routinely were exhibited with a range of products, almost like a state fair. The *Catálogo de la Exposición artística, industrial y agrícola* (Málaga, 1880), for example, covers a range of images and artists, including paintings of a *maja* and a *torero* of Denis Belgrano, a feudal castle and a study of the Alhambra by Antonio Muñoz Degrain, flower pictures by Bracho Murillo and Horacio Lengo, Picasso's father's *Palomas*, Emilio Ocón's *Sunset*, a *Virgen de la Victoria*, followed immediately by a *barro*, *A Seller of Anchovies* and a *Virgen* both by Antonio Gutiérrez de León. Under the heading "Secciones industrial y agrícola" there are bottles of wine and brandy, various objects made of *mimbre*

121 Picasso, *Guitar*, 1912, construction of sheet metal and wire, 77.5 × 19.3 cm., The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the Artist.



(caning), foodstuffs, crucifixes, flowers, and, randomly interspersed, machines like an oil press and a twelve-horsepower steam engine. At the catalogue's end, all its contributors are listed alphabetically, their occupations and products all mixed up: a painter follows a landowner who follows a farmworker.¹⁷ Sometimes *barros* are not listed in the artistic section at all: a *barro* by Rafael Gutiérrez de León, presented at the regional exhibition of Bellas Artes of the Liceo in 1899, is listed in the catalogue's section on *industrial arts*.¹⁸

The surviving works Picasso made during the ten years he lived in Málaga radiate *costumbrista* color and the *realismo* prized by adults he sought to emulate. Like other Malagueño painters of bullfights, he depicted a picador on horseback, in front of spectators, all in typical costume (1889–90; fig. 24). Unlike them, Picasso had his sister Lola literally pierce the picador's eye with a needle, as the picador pierces the bull. In his *Bullfighting Scene* (1890, fig. 26) the doors are marked with the numbers 1 through 5; then, on the other side, 69, 70 – as though the arena were gigantic, with an impossibly large number of doors. In the years after Picasso left Málaga he would continue to explore popular themes, would mix media, and would play with the notion of art as a commodity – qualities associated with *barros*. In his Cubist collages and constructions he would use many of the identical elements *barros* makers had used, if for drastically different ends.



In *barros* real elements are included to make art even more real. In a playful way, a self-conscious way, an ironic way, Cubist works call the project of mimesis – that is, the project of making realistic art – into question in the most radical way in the entire history of art.

In his Cubist constructions, Picasso would subvert mimesis by inserting exactly the same real elements – fringe, tassels, rope, metal wire, wood – that were used in *barros*, the most resolutely “realistic” art of his childhood, probably the most realistic art he had ever seen. He paradoxically would subvert the idea of art as a commodity by using the chief attributes of the most commodified art of his childhood.

As in the *barros* of Málaga, where a guitar has strings of industrially produced metal, Picasso made Cubist constructions of guitars with metal strings, as in a “normal” guitar, but then used them in impossible ways – as when he set four metal strings into his clearly unplayable sheet metal guitar (1912, fig. 121).

When *barros* makers used commercially produced rope for horse’s reins, as it was really used in Andalucía, they replaced, in effect, a realistically depicted version of an element with the real thing, setting up a one-to-one correspondence. For his cardboard model of *Guitarrón* (1912, fig. 78), Picasso took the same material, and again used it in impossible ways. He used string for the unplayable strings of a cardboard guitar – and set up a double pun: his “instrumento de cuerda” (string instrument) had strings of real string! He also subverted a normal functional relationship, where, say, string would be used to wrap a cardboard box or for a horse’s reins. Picasso’s cardboard instrument would be unlikely to survive even one string being plucked.

While *barros* makers used upholstery materials to adorn their highwaymen and señoritas, Picasso followed suit in his own (now aesthetically) transgressive *Still Life* (1914, fig. 122). His band of industrially produced passementerie tasseled balls decorate the downslanting arc, presumably the table on which the obviously unreal, inedible snack of a glossy wood sandwich and “liquid” is placed. The scallop decoration on the wooden knife’s handle plays off against the tassel’s rounded shape and scale. Again he used the real elements like a *barros* maker – as the material “itself” – in a “correct” place and context. Yet the rest of the image is resolutely anti-mimetic, obviously manipulated, patently fake.

122 Picasso, *Still Life*, 1914, painted wood and upholstery fringe, 25.4 × 45.7 × 9.2 cm, Tate Gallery, London.

123 Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912, oil, oilcloth, and pasted paper on canvas surrounded by rope, 27 × 35 cm., Musée Picasso, Paris.



The caning “represented” in *Still Life with Chair Caning* (fig. 123) evokes *mimbre*, *rejilla* (wickerwork) – a major craft in Málaga, and a recurrent theme in superstitions.¹⁹ (Caning was important in La Coruña as well.) In addition to recalling *barros*, the rope also could recall *soga*, *cuerda*, *reata*, *lazo* – kinds of rope manufactured in Málaga; and, perhaps as distant memory, the rope wrapped around the collage may recall the rope around the necks of the extravagantly realistic Christs of his childhood.²⁰

In his series, *Glasses of Absinthe* (1914, figs. 125–27), Picasso, like the *barros* makers, made identical images, then differentiated each one by painting it slightly differently. They originally were made in wax; Picasso’s dealer, Kahnweiler, had six copies made in bronze. All have ostentatious holes in their sides. None really could hold liquid. But Picasso kept the crudest, the most perversely anti-functional one for himself – delectably encrusting *his* glass, even the lip to be drunk from, with sand. Like the *barros* makers, he made an image of an outlaw – a popular but deadly drink – whose dangers were being heatedly debated and which had been banned by the end of that year.²¹ Like the *barros* makers, he inserted a real element into the correct place in his fictive context – here a real metal *grille à absinthe* used to dissolve the sugar into absinthe – but the glass and sugar cube are ludicrously obviously fake.

Picasso’s constructions, like *barros*, were small. Malagueño bourgeoisie, it was often noted, loved *lo pequeño*, a diminutive scale, so in that way, too, his works can be read as an ironic critique. (Not only their small scale, but also their profusion of delicate details.) Where as *barros* were made to appeal to a wide public, and were the most commodified art of his childhood, Picasso’s works are anti-cute, anti-charming, anti-accessible, often clunky in proportions.

Real elements also had adorned *imágenes*. But where they incorporated real elements of inherent value and beauty, such as carnations and gold, Picasso, like *barros* makers, used common, even vulgar materials. Where as *imágenes* were venerated by the public at large, Picasso’s Cubist images, now working out of a Symbolist ideal of

124 (facing page) Detail of fig. 125 (larger than actual size).





125 (above left) Picasso, *Glass of Absinthe*, 1914, painted bronze and perforated absinthe spoon, edition of six casts, each painted differently, 21.5 × 16.5 × 8.5 cm., The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mrs. Bertram Smith.

126 (above right) Picasso, *Glass of Absinthe*, 1914, painted bronze with perforated absinthe spoon, 21.5 × 16.5 × 8.5 cm., Philadelphia Museum of Art: A. E. Gallatin Collection.

intentional aesthetic elitism, would be venerated (or at least purchased and appreciated) by a tiny percentage of the Parisian public. Picasso's little constructions were sometimes made of hand-painted, polychromed carved wood: a material that ineluctably could have carried the memory of the sacred *imágenes* of his childhood. (There were sometimes small hand-carved polychromed *imágenes*, too, for worship in the home.²²) So in his Cubist works Picasso was not simply playing off high against low, in the traditionally understood way of elite (serious, even academic) versus popular art, but sacred against profane as well. He used techniques of most realistic art of his childhood to make aggressively anti-realistic images. He used techniques of the most commodified and most popularly coveted images of his childhood to make images that were anti-commodities, that almost no one would want to buy – and which, with few exceptions, he never sold.

And as for much of the iconography of Cubist pictures – the tacked-on adverts, instruments, and so on – Picasso worked out of the most resolutely realist paintings of his childhood, but manipulated and fragmented the elements in such a way that rather than convince in their realism, they sing of anti-reality.



127 Picasso, *Glass of Absinthe*, 1914, painted bronze with sand and perforated absinthe spoon, 21.5 × 16.5 × 8.5 cm., Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Gift of Louise and Michel Leiris, the donors retaining a life interest.

RURAL MYTHS AND THE POWER OF NEWSPAPERS

In October 1891, Picasso moved with his family from Málaga to La Coruña, another port in the north of Spain, another lost paradise. There the “popular” continued to be privileged, for different reasons, and serious artists, like his teacher Brocos, also worked in both elite and popular modes. In La Coruña, Picasso – who would paste on scraps of newsprint in his Cubist collages – also found a place where newspapers clamored for attention and carried contested, potent meanings.

La Coruña was described by those who loved her as a “paradise,” an extraordinarily verdant place, where “nature has overflowed” with “enchanted beauties”; with “trees and plants of every climate, flowers of an infinite variety.”²³ Gentle rains and mists cloaked her mountains and valleys “with a mantle of emerald,”²⁴ as healing “medicinal plants” grew wild.²⁵ Her climate was temperate.²⁶ This northern place was perfumed by the north: her name derived from the Celtic *Coryu*, which means language of the earth;²⁷ La Coruña’s histories, folktales, and customs were redolent of “primitive” Celts, Druids, bagpipes. Her people tended to be taller and fairer than those of Andalucía. La Coruña had been conquered by waves of “Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans.”²⁸ Her celebrated tower of Hercules, her oldest, most legendary monument, her starkly geometrical monument, was an image of conquest: it carried “the name of the victor over the Athenian Minotaur.”²⁹

In the 1880s Waldo Insua described La Coruña, the capital of the Galician region, as “a splendid and enchanting ensemble,” whose modern buildings, some five stories tall, even delighted travelers who knew Paris or New York.³⁰ Industrial work included refining petrol and fluid gas, the making of cigars, glass, textiles, flours, chocolates, soap, beer.³¹ Conspicuous consumption ruled: her ladies shone in their elegant finery, their earlobes, more often than not, glistened with diamonds.³²

Yet her countryside was being ravaged – not by epidemics or natural catastrophes, that is, not by malevolent nature, as in Málaga, but by human avarice, rampant corruption, and stultifying political and economic institutions. (Málaga had these too.) The despised central government in Madrid exacted crippling taxes, as the *caciques*, the hated local political bosses, and the usually absentee landlords bled individual farmers dry, even tricking them out of their measly plots of land.³³ Foreign competition made the situation worse, as did a repressive class system: “while humble laborers pay them rent,” freeloading aristocrats hunted and spent “all the months of the year deciphering the heraldry on their coats of arms.”³⁴ Thousands were forced to leave the land. The economic crisis became ever more severe as “emigration” became the burning topic in newspapers, journals, and cafés.

Emigration was no longer simply the province of individuals. Families and whole towns were leaving in droves. Panicked and heartsick writers characterized this as a “horrible and voracious epidemic,” or in biblical terms: as a “Calvary,” a forced “expulsion” from their garden of Eden.³⁵ Those forced to go, their “eyes swollen with a flood of tears,” were off, like “modern Israelites to the promised land.”³⁶ If this state of affairs was not stopped immediately, Insua cautioned, “in twenty years Galicia will be a cemetery and Spain a dead nation.”³⁷ Repeatedly in the press, in political debates, in essays by those on the right and the left, the country’s shattered myth of organic wholeness was viewed in metaphoric terms of *desmembración*, dismemberment. Many castigated those who left as irresponsibly precipitating the fragmentation of the land. Others attacked those in government, and argued that those who emigrated had no other options.³⁸

And so the popular and *el pueblo*, the people and their customs, especially of rural areas, had a very particular resonance in Galicia, a poignant resonance which carried an ideological charge.

Those who toughed it out and stayed on the land, however precarious their position, were, for many, the symbols of a moral good: they belonged to an apparently timeless world, a pre-industrialized, pre-urbanized world, bound to the land and to each other. "The farmer," Insua wrote, "is a superior and intelligent being, as worthy of respect as the man of science [...] as the artist [...] as the industrialist" (even if he contended that those on the land were easily manipulated as voters).³⁹ He continued with the hope that "Galicia would want to consecrate herself body and soul to agriculture."⁴⁰

Contemporary accounts on the arts wallowed in a discourse of victimization. Unlike the situation in Málaga, there was no comparable sense that this was a historic moment for the arts, which would be bolstered by institutional support. According to pieces written in Galego in the journal *A Monteira*, Galicia was "aldraxada, asobalada, esclavizada," abused, oppressed, enslaved; she was "emaciated and poor" because Madrid, like a vampire, had "sucked her blood" (1889). "The first thing Galicians should learn," wrote Heraclio Pérez Placer, was "to hate Castilians with all their soul" (1890).⁴¹

During this period of deep nostalgia, when many felt their rural culture was being lost, when many castigated those of La Coruña for facilely trying to copy the culture of other centers – in particular, Madrid – Brocos and his circle sculpted, painted, and wrote about what they understood to be this more authentically Galician, rural world. They reveled in the typical costumes, the "cloth cap and high silk hat, the English frockcoat and short jacket imported to Galicia."⁴² They revered typical musical instruments – especially the *gaita*, a type of bagpipe, often referred to as "la melancólica gaita celta"⁴³ (hardly an archetypal Spanish instrument!), and the *tambri*, a small drum, which together made the most typical music to accompany the most typical dance, the *muiñeira*. The *muiñeira*, unlike the explosive, fiery passion of Andalusian flamenco, was noted for its grace: for giving "the woman a placid expression of virtue and candor and the man one of ardor and valor."⁴⁴ They revered their language, Galego, that "harmonious and very soft tongue," that "tender dialect" touted as a supreme vehicle for "poetry and love" so beautifully exploited by poets such as Rosalía de Castro, Pondal, Curros, Losada, García Ferreiro, and Lamas Carvajal.⁴⁵

This magnificent obsession with the popular, this "sacred exhumation of everything provincial," this longing for one's own "peculiar language full of enchantments" was understood at the time as being part of a wider pan-European folkloric movement – a quest "to perpetuate traditions, conserve legends and beliefs, and inquire into the history of each *pueblo* and the origin of each race."⁴⁶ Many intellectuals joined the Sociedad del Folklore Gallego and other groups such as the Circo de Artesanos de La Coruña, devoting themselves to the preservation of Galician language, literature, culture, and customs.⁴⁷ But even if many regarded Galego as the language of culture, an object of fascination, even reverence, and even if, paradoxically, the best Galician literature of the period (such as the poetry of Rosalía de Castro) was written in the cities,⁴⁸ the language was not welcome there. It was banned in offices and courts of law.⁴⁹ This provoked some to lash out against Madrid's cultural and linguistic hegemony: "We want the moral independence of our mother country, we seek the end of the guardianship."⁵⁰ To continue to use Galego was to consider language as a weapon.

Some aggressively took the city's side against the country, arguing that popular traditions were not something to be preserved, but to be conquered. Rural folk were branded backward "rustics" and "rubes" responsible for holding the region back.⁵¹

Newspapers became the major arena for heated, sometimes violent, debates over emigration and regionalism (*regionalismo*) – that is, over the possibility and desirability of an authentic regional identity, understood in Galicia in terms of a mythic rural identity and self-determination. *El regionalismo* was based on the premise that “No one would deny that the different regions that compose the Iberian peninsula [. . .] display among themselves substantial and profound discordances.”⁵² In Galicia, many shared the belief that “no land has been as scorned as Galicia [. . .] converting it into a *pueblo* that is humiliated daily, in the economic, the industrial, the agricultural and the scientific spheres.”⁵³ Attacks from Madrid often were in the local press. A Madrid newspaper, *El Imparcial* put it in accusatory terms: “What are these masses of population that dismember their mother country going to do in far-off lands?”⁵⁴ In *El Ciclón*, Eduardo Valenti attacked *regionalismo* as a “sin, if not a crime” very much at odds with the general drift of the century, in which “everything converges with steamships and electricity.”⁵⁵ The *Eco de Galicia*, by contrast, applauded a host of major politicians, religious figures, poets, and artists, all of whom “declare themselves to be *regionalistas*.”⁵⁶ Because of these bitter debates, newspaper journalism or *periodismo* was regularly invoked as a key issue in Galician cultural life.

Isidoro Brocos, Picasso’s teacher, was a passionate regionalist. While, like many Malagueño sculptors, he worked simultaneously in different genres, his local acclaim came from little terracotta sculptures of *costumbrista* (referred to as *pin-toresca*), scenes of peasants in their characteristic sartorial finery – as in *Light Breakfast*, an image of an old Galician taking his *parva* or light, late-morning snack during a work break (c. 1887, fig. 128). Others, like the *Flea* (1880), portray figures whose clothes are threadbare, frayed, yet whose expressions and postures are serene, often sweet – no hint of incipient insurrection here. Unlike the case of Malagueño *barros*, he did not paint his little sculptures, nor add real elements to them.

Balsa de la Vega, in 1891, praised Brocos for “abandoning sculpture of a tragic character” to make his “little statues and groups of rural subjects” – works, he felt, of “great truth” and realism. Brocos could achieve this, he continued, because he was one with his subjects:

Brocos is a Galician peasant [who talks] with his models about the weather, the harvest, the cow; [. . .]. His daily contact with his models and his countrymen completely tranquilizes him, returning him to the life where his infancy and the first part of his youth transpired.⁵⁷

Brocos assiduously attended literary and political cenacles, for example the Cova Céltica. In 1905 he was named a corresponding member of the new Real Academia Gallega de la Lengua, where he met other important figures in Galician cultural life.⁵⁸ A piece in the *Voz de Galicia* (19 February 1895) lists Picasso’s father, D. José Ruiz Blasco, as well as Brocos as participating in the inaugural session of the Academia Gallega.

Picasso explored La Coruña with Brocos. With a profusion of sketches, drawings, and paintings, Picasso intensely engaged his teacher’s beloved *regionalista* themes – capturing an array of costumes and attributes, sometimes inflecting them with his own irreverent slant. In his grammar textbook, Picasso drew a rural figure in characteristic dress – with his distinctive hat, short fitted jacket, and flared trousers (1891–92);⁵⁹ in another textbook sketch, he drew an old countrywoman, with sour craggy features, in her shawl and apron, barefoot, her hand out, as though begging (1892).⁶⁰ In yet another drawing, he depicted a village scene, including a passel of



128 Isidoro Brocos, *Light Breakfast*, c. 1887, terracotta, 59.5 × 42 × 43 cm., Museo de Bellas Artes, La Coruña.

pigs, a couple in Galician dress – the man in fitted breeches and high boots, she in a banded jacket, apron, and skirt (1893; fig. 129). Their world is hardly a paragon of harmony: in the foreground, two kids tear at each other's hair, while in the distance, a vigorous figure with a whip leads horses and a covered wagon. On another sheet, entitled *Rateros* (pickpockets), he drew characters, some with knives, recalling the romanticized highwaymen and outlaws of Málaga (c. 1894).⁶¹ (These scruffy figures no longer look particularly picturesque.) Sketches capture mutton-chop sideburns and a range of hats, some pointed, some flat. He gave the title "Un Carlista" to a rather finished drawing of a man in a *carlista* beret holding a long rifle (c. 1894);⁶² he made a vivid sketch of Galician peasants dancing to the music of bagpipes (1895, fig. 130). Young and old together share an *Afternoon in the Fields*, a bucolic scene, in blissful harmony (1894).⁶³ His oil paintings *Beggar in a Cap* (1895)⁶⁴ and *Barefoot Girl* (1895, fig. 131) empathetically evoke the Galician *pueblo*. As Picasso remembered to Antonina Vallentin, "The poor girls in our country never wear shoes, and this little girl suffered badly from corns."⁶⁵ With her wistful, despondent expression, the theme and humane portrayal of the *Barefoot Girl* evince his teacher's concerns. Yet where Brocos's figures are diminutive and picturesque, Picasso made a larger image with a comparatively massive internal scale – drawing upon artists of the *Siglo de Oro* to imbue his peasant with a weighty nobility, a sense of longing, a vulnerable grandeur.⁶⁶

At this time in Galicia – when newspapers were the arena of raging debates, and when not only newspapers but also the sometimes inflammatory character of their journalism (*periodismo*) had themselves become a focus of contention – Picasso made a series of his own hand-drawn newspapers, a popular childhood amusement, which resonated with many of the same issues as the adult newspapers of his time. At

129 Picasso, *Country Scene*,
1893, pencil on paper,
12.9 × 20.6 cm., Museu
Picasso, Barcelona.



130 Picasso, *Galician Peasants*,
1895, pen and ink on paper,
13.2 × 21 cm., Heirs of the Artist.

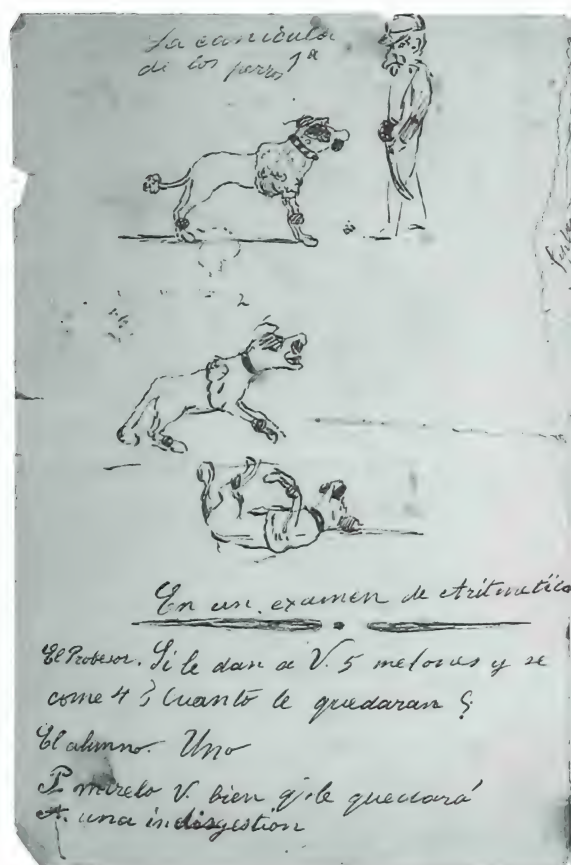


131 (facing page) Picasso,
Barefoot Girl, 1895, oil on canvas,
75 × 50 cm., Musée Picasso, Paris.

the very least, he was working out of his teacher's concerns and images, even if he was not fully aware of the debate. In his *Asul* [sic] *y blanco* (blue and white, the colors of Galicia⁶⁷) and *La Coruña*, he captured the local colors of La Coruña, including rural images of peasants and regional customs. As self-proclaimed director, writer, illustrator, and administrator, he worked out of the title and some features of *Blanco y negro*, the most popular weekly in Spain, while playing with the idea of making a "commodity" of his own.⁶⁸

On the first page of *Asul y blanco*, dated 8 October 1893 (fig. 132), which he drew with brown ink, Picasso added a price, "10ctns," and more business-like information: "Published every Sunday/Telegrams/Madrid" (as though the newspaper were published in Madrid); "At the time of going to press, no telegram has been received." And he added dancing tubes of paint. Its second page, dated 24 September 1894 (fig. 133), adopted the format of "exam jokes" with comic dialogue of a kind printed





Entre aguadores

- Non ~~dis~~ viste quella mais chubasco
que este Madrid?

¿ Por que nun han de ir a todos los
pueblos?

El hombre para apagarlos

¿ Entonces para q' dice en todas
casas la aseguranta de incendio? »



in Blanco y negro (although Picasso, characteristically, added illustrations).⁶⁹ He topped the page with the phrase *La canícula de los perros*, slang for “dog days”; below, a drawing depicts the expression literally, as a cartoon-like sequence. On top, a dog stands alertly; just below, his hind legs seem to buckle, and below, he lies flat on his back, as if suffering from heat prostration. Then there is a joke based on arithmetic: “Professor: ‘If I give you 5 melons and you eat 4, what’s left?’ Student: ‘Indigestion!’” – again, taking the meaning literally instead of in terms of more abstract numbers.

On the right page, headed “Between watercarriers,” Picasso’s text picks up on the widespread distrust, even hatred of Madrid: “Non he vistu pueblu mais enbustero que este Madrid,” “I haven’t seen a more dishonest *pueblu* than this Madrid.”⁷⁰ Here and in his writing below, Picasso, who seems to have realized that language was a loaded or at least characterizing issue, used some Galician words, like “mais” instead of the Castilian “mas,” as well as some words, like “pueblu” and “todus,” that are neither; perhaps they are dialect words, or his transcription of rural voices – or he may have begun speaking a mixture of both!

In *La Coruña*, dated 16 September 1894 (fig. 134), dedicated to his Uncle Salvador, Picasso drew the bust of an archetypal “Tipo gallego” (his caption) in his character-

134 Picasso, *La Coruña*, 16 September 1894, pen-and-(brown) ink and pencil, 21 x 26 cm., Musée Picasso, Paris.

istic cap and vest, and under that, in uncharacteristically elegant script, he wrote “Fiestas en La Coruña” (a text which may have been copied or dictated by his father):

4 August. At exactly twelve o'clock this morning a general peal of bells, a salvo from twelve cannons, and the bagpipes of the country playing gay popular tunes will announce the beginnings of the festivities. On the 5th at daybreak the garrison band will march through the principal streets playing lively reveilles, while bagpipes regale our ears with merry aubades. At eleven the solemn religious service will be celebrated in the splendidly decorated church of San Jorge, with the municipal council and principal authorities in attendance, carrying out the vow made by the people of La Coruña on 19 May 1589 after being liberated from the siege of the English armada by the heroic act of María Mayor Fernández de la Cámara y Pita. The illustrious and eloquent sacred orator Sr. Don Antolín López Peláez, preacher of the cathedral at Lugo, will be entrusted with the panegyric, and the Most Excellent and Most Illustrious Archbishop of Santiago will celebrate Mass in the presence of the cathedral chapter. At 5 in the afternoon several greasy poles will be erected in the promenade of the avenue of Mendez-Núñez in front of the Sporting-Club. At 9 at night during intermissions of the musical performance on this avenue, balloons of grotesque and varied forms will be launched at the same time that an infinitude of fireworks will illuminate the sky with a surprising and variegated lustre. (To be continued).⁷¹

He headed another page “Todo revuelto,” an expression used for sections of *Blanco y negro*, and sketched below a flurry of personages, playing-cards, and scrawled phrases like “el juego” (the game). In one of the small images a man with a knife faces someone whom he has evidently just attacked – the victim’s hat jumps off his head as blood spurts out of his body. On the fourth page, along with a sketch of La Coruña’s landmark, the Tower of Hercules, Picasso drew two women in shawls, bundled up, walking into deep water – with the caption, “how those of BETANZOS bathe.”⁷² Here he was poking fun at, even mocking, those of the ignorant (and perhaps prudish) countryside – if so, taking a position at odds with Brocos.

Azul y blanco of 28 October 1894, “published every Sunday,” includes a labeled sketch of “a newspaper seller,” the sketch of a country woman in her kerchief, and a mega-formal and flowery notice “to our subscribers that from today the newspaper ‘Azul y Blanco’ continues its functions, [signed] sss, q.b.s.m. [your loyal servant, who kisses your hand], the director, P. Ruiz.”⁷³ On the second page, an advertisement to buy pigeons: “Se compran palomas de casta/ Dirigirse a la calle/ de Payo Gómez/ número 14-p. 2^o/ Coruña.”⁷⁴ Adult newspapers routinely included lists of “telegrams received,” advertisements really. On the fourth page of his newspaper Picasso wrote: “Telegrams: At the hour of going to press no telegram has been received because of the bad state of the lines (The editors)” – as though “they” temporarily were foiled because of mechanical problems. And he wrote a standard newspaper expression, “Nota de actualidad” (Note of current events) with his own smart-aleck entry: “P. Ruiz/ Well Sirs, we don’t have anything in particular to say to you.”⁷⁵

During Picasso’s first infatuation with newspapers, they were potent messengers of the private as well as the collective realm. They carried news of personal humiliation and personal tragedy. Two belittling reviews of work by his father, José Ruiz Blasco, came out in the *Voz de Galicia*, before Picasso drew his last *Azul y blanco*. The first, of 9 March 1894 commented on a painting of an orange branch and roses: “The execution appears to be significantly inferior to that of other works of Sr. Blasco, the flowers as well as the leaves are not very fresh”; the reviewer grudgingly conceded that “the color of the oranges, like the background, isn’t bad.”⁷⁶ The

second review, of 15 October 1894, packed a double humiliation by misspelling his name: a painting

by the professor of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Sr. Raiz [*sic*] Blasco, represents two flowers alone, abandoned. For some time flowers have been Sr. Ruiz Blasco's favorite theme, in spite of which he is still rather far from mastering it, and from imprinting the flowers he paints with the freshness, transparency, and color which his models certainly had.⁷⁷

After this review, when his picture was compared unfavorably with his assistant's, Picasso's father never publically exhibited again.⁷⁸ On 11 January 1895 the *Voz de Galicia* carried the death notice of his seven-year-old daughter, her name misspelled Concepción Ruiz Picarro.⁷⁹

Newspapers also carried the news of Picasso's own triumphs, his own glory. They carried the first glowing reviews of his work, exhibited in shop windows. On 21 February 1895, four months after belittling his father, the same *Voz de Galicia* crowed:

By a boy of thirteen, son of the professor of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Sr. Ruiz Blasco, are two studies of heads painted in oil, exhibited to the public at the furniture store on the Calle Real owned by the heirs of Joaquín Latorre. They are not badly drawn, the coloring is accurate and the tonal values well executed [. . .] when one considers the artist's age. But what is surprising is the boldness and confidence with which they are executed [. . .]. If he continues in this manner don't doubt that he will achieve days of glory and a brilliant future.⁸⁰

On the same page, just below this triumphant first review – and so visually associated with it – was an advertisement for Joaquín de la Torre's furniture store: "The most beautiful furniture, the most solid, the most durable, the best constructed, the most inexpensive is sold in this establishment."⁸¹ On 3 March 1895 the *Voz de Galicia* praised Picasso again – mistakenly giving the son the father's name – for his second exhibition, his *Beggar in a Cap*, in another shop window on the same street. The picture,

by the young Sr. Ruiz Blasco [*sic*], is new proof of his pictorial talent. It represents a beggar who is very well known in La Coruña [. . .] and the execution denotes true courage [*valentía*], as if the brushes were handled by an artist of considerable experience, instead of by a neophyte. The color is sober, and the drawing, although a bit incorrect in some parts of the figure, allows one to presume that it will be easy for the young artist to correct this and other faults which, at his age, are very easy to commit.⁸²

And the same newspaper trumpeted his name, along with those of the other students who won the coveted honor grade of *sobresaliente* (outstanding) at the Instituto da Guarda. In June 1894 he was one of seven students awarded *sobresaliente* in figure drawing; the next year, his name, prefixed by a respectful D. for "Don," was listed with the sole other student who received *sobresaliente* in "figure drawing, after plaster casts."⁸³

Picasso engaged still other popular forms. After he moved to La Coruña, he painted tambourines: an instrument, like the guitar, associated with the joyous songs of Andalucía, and played in Málaga for fiestas such as the winter solstice Fiesta de las Verdiales, celebrated on 28 December. (They were also used and painted in La Coruña, but not considered typical of that region, as bagpipes were.) He may have given some away as gifts, or sold some; but he kept others almost all his life.⁸⁴ If the object was identified with Andalucía, he painted his in a decidedly non-Andalusian vein. Rather than adorn them with ribbons, festive images, and colors, he painted his tambourines in somber hues, in a "realist" style. In one, first painted in oils on parchment, then

135 Picasso, *Bearded Old Man*, 1894–95, oil on parchment attached to a tambourine, diameter 18.5 cm., Museu Picasso, Barcelona.



pasted on (1894–95, fig. 135), a bushily bearded man, with closed – perhaps blinded – eyes, was painted over carnations (a flower associated with Andalucía), visible on the verso when the tambourine is held up to the light.⁸⁵ Several years after Picasso had moved to Barcelona, he painted another tambourine, this time adorned with an archetypal Andalusian couple, in a *modernista* style, with sinuous outlines and simplified forms. Besides shaking a tambourine, the only way to make percussive sounds is to pat or strike it. As one strikes the image, the paint will wear off. Some of the paint on this tambourine has worn off, as if it has in fact been struck (1899).⁸⁶

THE SPLENDOR OF ADVERTS

When Picasso moved with his family to Barcelona, he came, again, to a place where the popular was privileged, a “popular” now in a vibrant Catalan mode. Although Barcelona’s climate is mild, her flora and fauna beautiful to behold, guide-books of the 1880s marveled more at her hardworking citizens and her industries, listing page after page of them, literally from A to Z, registering a euphoria over new products and technologies.⁸⁷ Because Barcelona’s economy was so diversified, even when phylloxera struck, the plague didn’t have remotely the same impact as it did in Málaga. The political situation, again, was precarious. Barcelona in the 1890s witnessed an almost relentless succession of anarchist attacks, strikes, newspapers censored, rocks thrown, sticks brandished, guns fired, barricades built, bombings, assassinations, harsh reprisals, states of war. There was a recurring draconian repression by the right, but also internecine power struggles between competing classes and ideologies on the left, which ultimately would help bring down the Second Republic.

For the bourgeoisie, at least, the economy was strong. A dynamic new industry, spurred on by a surge of technological inventions, was that of graphic arts – not only printed books, but posters, flyers, commercial announcements for Barcelona’s shops and products, often cast in the brilliant avant-garde idiom of *modernisme*.⁸⁸

In Barcelona, Picasso found his first real artistic community, his first exposure to – and conversion to – the avant-garde – a modernity caught up with technology, inextricably bound up with its own urban and sophisticated notions of the “popular,” and steeped, for many, in the politics of the Catalan nation and a dream of Catalonia’s *renaixensa* or cultural regeneration.

The visual styles and subjects, as well as the fundamental attitudes, of the leading *modernista* artists Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas were imbued with their stays in Montmartre. Casas drew on his experience, from the precocious age of fifteen, in the academy of Carolus-Duran and later Gervex, as well as a grab-bag of other inspirations, among them Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Sargent, Whistler, Degas, strains of Art Nouveau, and Symbolism (this last in terms of a “decorative” surface pattern). Rusiñol wrote pieces for Barcelona’s *La Vanguardia* about developments as diverse as Seurat’s Pointillisme, Puvis de Chavannes, and the bohemian cabaret culture of Montmartre – Yvette Gilbert performing at *café concerts*, the antics of Aristide Bruant at the Mirliton, Rodolf Salis at the Chat Noir. His own paintings are often steeped in Symbolist dreams of decadence (like his *Morphine Addict*, 1894, in which the woman grips her bedsheets). *Modernista* journals proliferated. Although there was no monolithic style, subject, theoretical rationale or emotional tonality, what they shared was a will to be modern, to be new, to look to Europe, often to paint the world around them, such as Casas’s bicyclists and women in the latest fashion.⁸⁹

Leading artists had their images mechanically reproduced and popularly distributed throughout the city, plastered on walls as posters and advertisements, sold in kiosks as covers on magazines, handed out in restaurants as menus – as in Casas’s striking chromolithographed posters for Anís del Mono (1898) and Sifilis (1899–1900, fig. 136), with its Art Nouveauesque whiplash lines. Poster competitions proliferated: Casas had entered and won a poster competition for Anís del Mono at the Cercle Artístic; Picasso entered one for the Quatre Gats café (based on Montmartre’s Chat Noir), which would become his Barcelona base and artistic community. His entry – which came second and was used for the chromolithographed menu (1899–1900, fig. 137)⁹⁰ – relies on a strong surface pattern and bold outlines that recall Casas’s posters for the puppet shows at the Quatre Gats (*Puchinel·lis 4 gats*, 1898)⁹¹ as well as his covers for the journal *Pèl & Ploma*, of which he was artistic director. This stance apparently could not be farther from that of La Coruña, where the *pueblo* and *their* regionalism was understood as the opposite of commodities and industry.

In Barcelona, they were not mutually exclusive. As in La Coruña, there also was an intense interest in regional customs, traditions, folklore, folksongs (which regularly were reprinted in *modernista* journals), in the land, the beloved *terra catalana*, in characteristic clothes (like the *barretina*, a red hat), characteristic dances (the *sardana*, a circle dance), musical instruments (the *tenora*, a wind instrument Picasso would include in Cubist works), and especially, the Catalan language.⁹² The Catalan language was an emblem of defiant resistance, repeatedly banned, passed down covertly, later publicly revived; the language itself was a weapon, a banner against Madrid and her hegemonic powers.

Barcelona had extraordinarily distinctive popular forms: pageants, parades, carnivals. Their players – such as the *nans* (costumed children with huge masks), *xiquets de valls* (human pyramids), and *gegants* (giant figures, whose changing real clothes, hair, and beards set fashion in Barcelona society) – would parade through the Carrer Nou, the Barri Gòtic, the Ramblas, the Plaça Catalunya, through Barcelona’s streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces, in all their rowdy, colorful unruliness. Civic ritual, popular ritual, became a site of battle. The master trope came from Catholicism – even though the culture was far more secularized than other regions of Spain.

SÍFILIS

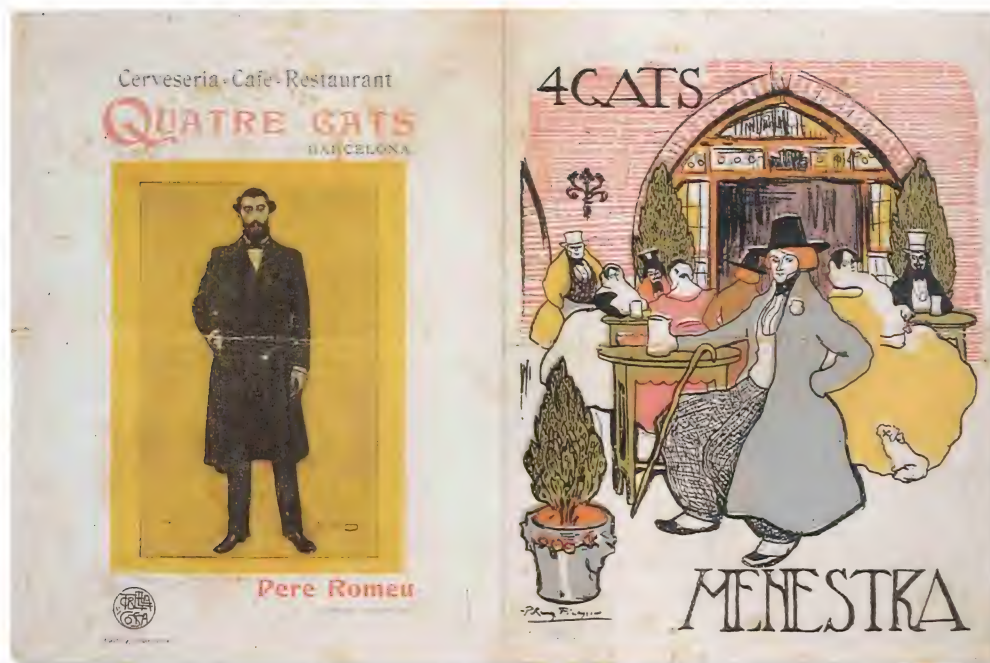


Curación
absoluta y radical
en el
Sanatorio para sífilíticos
Calle Mayor de la Bonanova 74.

Para más informes al Dr. Albreu, calle Vergara 10 - Barcelona
ó en el mismo establecimiento
al Administrador Sr. Rumiá

J. THOMAS - BARCELONA

136 Ramon Casas, *Sífilis*,
1899-1900, chromolithograph,
80 x 34.5 cm., Museu d'Art
Modern, Barcelona.



137 Picasso, menu for the Quatre Gats, 1899–1900, pencil on chromolithograph, 21.8 × 32.8 cm., Museu Picasso, Barcelona.

In the late nineteenth century, frequent Catholic festivities were celebrated by virtually the entire population – from the devout to the anti-clerical.⁹³ Catholicism became intensely identified with certain sectors of Catalan nationalism, in part because Catalonia putatively was the only place in the world where the catechism, the rosary, and the Lord's Prayer were recited in the Catalan vernacular, instead of in Latin.

Like religious processions, traditional folk forms came to be identified with Catalan nationalism. Shadow puppets (made of cardboard with parts that moved to the accompaniment of colored lights and often rude dialogue) and children's puppet shows (especially those by the master puppeteer Julio Pi) were performed with gusto at the Quatre Gats in colloquial Catalan in high-pitched voices, and came to be inflected with civic meanings.⁹⁴ (This even as shadow puppets were imported from Paris's Chat Noir cabaret).

Catalan *modernistes*, like those of Picasso's Quatre Gats group, defined themselves by being eclectic with a vengeance, by looking to Europe in order to transform Catalonia into a more modern and cosmopolitan nation, as opposed to Spain.⁹⁵ As Joan Maragall explained, they looked to Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, then sought to *hagámoslo nuestro*.⁹⁶ Rusiñol spent time in Symbolist circles in Paris; many of his ideas are steeped in French Symbolist thought. His vision of artists as "high priests" and of art as a religion opposed to crass commercialism could be direct quotations from such writers as G.-Albert Aurier.⁹⁷ (In characteristic Catalan Symbolist terms, Rusiñol recast this idea with his Festa Modernista of 1894, when he paraded two El Grecos, a *San Pedro* and a *Santa Magdalena*, through the streets, like holy *imágenes* to be venerated, before they would be ensconced in his newly created museum of Cau Ferrat at Sitges, just outside Barcelona.⁹⁸) This was Picasso's introduction to a world of Symbolist ideas, ranging from artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlen, and Puvis de Chavanne to poets like Verlaine and to the cult of Wagner (the Quatre Gats had its own Wagner Society, and Wagner was performed at the Liceu). Picasso, then, was introduced to Montmartre even before he set foot on French soil. Rusiñol and Picasso made such ideas their own, in part, by appropriating indigenous Catalan popular and folk forms – forms that had become emblems of resistance – then by charging them further with aesthetically subversive meanings.

In Barcelona, Picasso continued to play with issues of mechanical production and commodification, as he experimented with a range of newly modern styles.⁹⁹ In 1896 he pasted the printed blue label of a British sketchbook manufacturer, Reeves & Sons, on to two of his drawings, as though, like *barros* makers', his productions were handled and sold by a British firm: the first, an ink sketch of the Last Supper; the second, a sheet of sketches, made with a range of materials (aquatint, pencils, pen) of faces, bodies, a *modernista* Manola, a hand, buttocks, random scribbles, on which he used a manufactured stamp to print "PLANELLA" in red ink (fig. 138). On both he added his price, 1 peseta, even though neither drawing could be remotely construed as "finished" or even saleable.¹⁰⁰

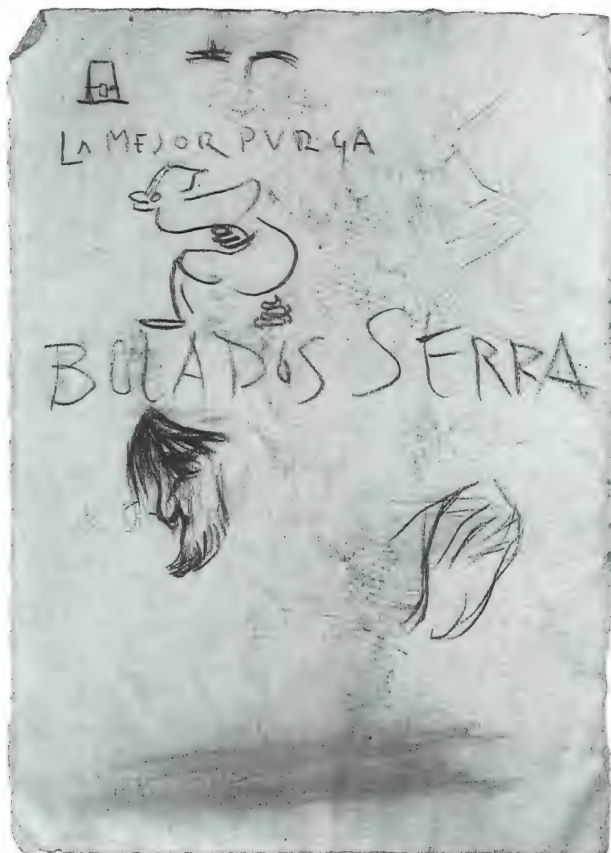
138 (below left) Picasso, *Sketches and Label from Reeves & Sons*, 1896, aquatint, ink, pencil, conté crayon, and pasted-on label, on album page, 18 × 12.5 cm., Museu Picasso, Barcelona.

139 (below right) Picasso, *Barcelona Cathedral*, 1899, ink on paper, 31.9 × 21.8 cm., Museu Picasso, Barcelona.

On another sheet, Picasso drew a series of quick ink sketches, including a typical "framed" one, presumably saleable, of Barcelona Cathedral, with the words "De los claustros de la catedral" (From the cloisters of the cathedral) emblazoned below it. Repeated three times nearby are the words "Fábrica de dibujos" (Drawing factory), "Barcelona," and his name (1899, fig. 139). Perhaps he meant to imply that he was a drawing factory, or that the image was produced by such a factory.

He also made his own comic advertisement, for Bolados Serra (c. 1899, *Serra Sweetmeats*, fig. 140), proclaimed "la mejor purga" (the best purgative/the best crap), above the image of an extravagantly defecating figure – as though he were hawking a laxative. Advertisements in *Blanco y negro* – such as one that promises "no more headaches" – were more decorous in nature (fig. 141).





141 (above) Advertisement promising "No more headaches" Blanco y negro, 29 August 1896, 297.

140 (left) Picasso, *Serra Sweetmeats*, c. 1899, conté crayon on paper, 16.2 x 11.6 cm, Museu Picasso, Barcelona.

Where *barros* makers had mixed media in terms of a conventional, if charming, style and traditional medium, artists in Picasso's Quatre Gats circle worked, in a modern idiom, with a range of popular and elite genres. Picasso began subversively to shatter the boundaries between them, by inventing modern collage – as in his *Man and Newspaper Cut-out* (1899, fig. 66).¹⁰¹

Picasso explored other images of the popular as well. In a vivid watercolor, he painted a Catalan in his distinctive red hat, his *barretina* (1895).¹⁰² With emphatic *modernista* undulating outlines, he drew *costumbrista* images of urban workers, like the luggage maker carrying his wares (1898) and the wagon driver, both in their characteristic *barretina* and *blusón* (1898, fig. 142).¹⁰³

During a trip to Horta, where he lived among peasants, he again tapped into myths of organic pre-industrialized wholeness – capturing image after image of Catalan types in their characteristic clothing, country folk in the fields, woodcutters, washerwomen, some with the attributes of their profession (1898).¹⁰⁴ (These resonated with popular journals, such as *Blanco y negro*, which often included sections on "tipos populares" from all over Spain.) He continued to make such images, as in *Evocations of Horta* (1903), a series of watercolors and drawings, with their homely scenes and costumes, and elegiac feel. In a series of sketches, he drew all the characteristic features of the Malagueño *cenachero* – his broad-sash, broad-brimmed hat, hanging buckets, rolled-up trousers – and a Velázquez head just behind him (1899, fig. 143). For all his fascination with the different regions where he had lived, Picasso spurred himself to cast his fascination with popular culture in the most exalted of terms. On a *costumbrista* drawing of Aragonese types in characteristic dress, he invoked the highest level of artistic ambition, a great Spanish tradition that transcended her battling regions – by emblazoning the command, "Greco, Velázquez, inspire me!" (1898).¹⁰⁵ Soon he would go to Paris, to a vast new world of popular images and meanings.



142 Picasso, *The Wagon Driver*, 1898, conté crayon on paper, 31.8 x 24.6 cm., Museu Picasso, Barcelona.



143 Picasso, *Cenachero*,
1899, ink on paper,
20.5 × 12.9 cm., Museu
Picasso, Barcelona.

MAGIC ACTS: POPULAR CULTURE IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY PARIS

The visual culture of Paris at the turn of the century included a riot of anti-naturalistic images that Picasso would commandeer into the service of high art. In theaters and fairs, conjurors hacked off human limbs and restored them in arrangements unknown to medicine; in popular science journals, trick photographers crafted bizarre heads with two profiles; in the earliest films, ladies vanished and reappeared as men; on the vaudeville stage, painted images abruptly came to life, then reverted to art again. Picasso, I believe, was inspired by these visual *tours de force*, which he found in the cinema of Georges Méliès in particular and in popular culture at large. At this time, avant-garde artists, having embraced an anti-academic, anti-bourgeois ideology, looked to popular forms like these as a stimulus for subverting the conventions of high art.

The relationship between the cinema of Méliès and the Cubism of Picasso is not one of visual resemblance. Cubist works do not look like stills from Méliès's films nor do they share any obvious stylistic traits with any other genres of popular culture. Yet within the French tradition, many of Cubism's most radical features – such as the explicit and self-conscious dialogue between art and reality, the comic fragmentation of body parts, the use of conflicting multiple perspectives, and the insertion of letters, numbers, advertising copy, and real prosaic objects into artistic contexts – all had previously occurred in their *most literal* form, or had occurred not in high art but *only* in the popular culture pervasive at that time. Picasso took the tricks and effects also found in three-minute films shown in street fairs or the basements of billiard parlors and transformed them into the instruments of high art.

At this historical moment the boundaries between art and nature, as well as Art and non-art, were under siege. When artists plundered previously forbidden realms, and deliberately broke the boundaries between “high” and “low” culture, their violations were part of an active campaign of transgressions against convention on all fronts – from the aesthetic to the political and religious. The subversive act of transgression became central to the way in which they redefined their art and themselves. Painters who appropriated the thematic materials of film knew that film was considered an emphatically *popular* form, not one of the accepted fountains of high art. In fact the transgression was so extreme that most early critics and reviewers were unaware – as is much of art history even now – that it had even happened. The chasm between cinema and art was so profound that the very possibility of a relationship between them would have seemed impossible.

CINEMA CONTRA ART

Early films tended to be shown in settings and to audiences that were not traditionally associated with art of any stripe. The first Lumière showing at the Grand-Café was a rather elegant event. But after a cinema projector caught fire at the very fashionable Bazar de la Charité on 4 May 1897, the audience for early cinema came to be associated with the urban and rural working and lower middle classes.¹⁰⁶ In Paris, as in the country, movies were shown to working-class audiences in parish halls, music halls, and basements of billiard parlors, as well as at fairs in the streets or, beyond city limits, in the *banlieues*. The price of admission ranged from 1.50 francs down to 30 centimes, a price low enough to make films accessible to virtually anyone.¹⁰⁷

In its own right, the early cinema most emphatically was not considered an art form: early trade journals as well as guidebooks and business directories make clear that, for some time, it stood at the bottom of a hierarchy of public entertainments. Even in specialized dailies like *L'Orchestre*, which spanned the gamut from high



theater and concerts to the *caf' conc'*, *séances cinématographiques* were rarely mentioned, even when the establishments in which they occurred were included under other rubrics, like *cafés*. In the rare instances where *séances cinématographiques* were mentioned (almost exclusively at Méliès's own Théâtre Robert Houdin) the guidebooks listed prices, as they also did for circuses.¹⁰⁸ Guidebooks did not list prices for theaters, concerts, *cabarets artistiques*, or even *café concerts* – spectacles whose audiences presumably did not have to ask themselves whether or not they could afford to attend.¹⁰⁹

Early cinema was not yet one of the “low” forms found acceptable by self-consciously advanced artists and critics. Popular songs could be regarded as bohemian, and therefore even noble. They were sung in avant-garde cabarets, reprinted in avant-garde journals in France and Spain, and viewed as the spontaneous outgrowth of native “primitive” folk, and the organic, even spiritual, product of a particular region.¹¹⁰ Exotic hand-made optical illusions of *ombres chinoises* were standard fare at cabarets such as the Chat Noir in Paris, or the Quatre Gats in Barcelona.¹¹¹ Courbet, after all, had drawn on the simple images of Epinal; Gauguin looked to the “primitive” stained glass and hand-carved images of Brittany and Tahiti. By contrast, the cinema was machine made. It lacked distinctive regional flavor, was international, and was widely regarded as a commodity from the start.¹¹²

Many avant-garde artists, like many of the bourgeoisie and *beau monde*, were enthralled by “low” acts in Parisian cabarets and *café concerts*: by songs full of scabrous argot and *louche* stories, delivered by performers of questionable virtue. Picasso was, too – making a profusion of paintings of this intoxicating deep night world, Toulouse-Lautrec's world, often in Lautrec's style. He captured the characteristic costumes and gestures – the *chanteuses* with their virulent faces and towering coiffures, their black-stockinged legs and expressive gloved arms; the cancan dancers with their staccato kicks and phosphorescent yellow-green crinolines; the patrons with their ravenous eyes.¹¹³ On one level, it was an outlaw world – with the sometimes seedy clientele and the often risqué nature of the programs. But it had been claimed – and sanctioned – for some time.

Other “low” entertainments with an outlaw component were wildly popular with the bourgeoisie. The best paid performer of the time was Joseph Pujol, “Le Pétomane” (The Fartomaniac). He would stride on to the tiny stage of the Moulin Rouge, wearing a silk coat, satin britches, and patent leather pumps. He would then ceremoniously bend over and proceed to “play” tunes (including favorites like *Au Clair de la lune*), “smoke” cigarettes (through a rubber pipe), and finally blow out a candle from a foot away – all with air produced from his rectum. Audiences howled with laughter.¹¹⁴ The Grand Guignol and similar theaters specialized in short plays with lurid stories, with buckets of “blood,” guts, and gore – for example eyeballs (from animals) that popped when they hit the floor (they were precursors of horror movies¹¹⁵). On their first trip to Paris, Picasso and Casagemas visited the Théâtre Montmartre, whose depicted “evil deeds” Casagemas salaciously described in a letter home.¹¹⁶ Picasso engaged this world artistically in 1904, when he made a watercolor sketch for a poster (never printed) for a play at the Grand Guignol – top hats and tarts in feathers are startled by a female corpse, blood dribbling from her mouth.¹¹⁷ But neither the Pétomane nor the Grand Guignol had the slightest pretensions to artistry; and as titillating, even outrageous as their productions were, they did nothing to offend good bourgeois sensibilities, or, at least at this point, attract avant-garde artists in a sustained way.

Perhaps the most distinctive factor in the perceived chasm between cinema and art, and in the apparent unwillingness of early critics to see a connection between Cubism and film, was the latter's putatively mimetic, photographic basis. The first



144b Louis Lumière, *Feeding the Baby*, 1895, Film Stills Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Lumière films – straightforward shorts of prosaic events such as parents encouraging their baby to feed, horses galloping, a train chugging along a track – made no pretense to be anything other than mimetic (figs. 144a and b).¹¹⁸ Yet within a year of their first showing, Georges Méliès began his transformation of the cinema, by substituting an extravagantly anti-naturalistic approach for the Lumières' apparently passive recording of scenes in nature.¹¹⁹ From this point onwards, fantastic magic acts, fairy tales, and science fiction formed the bulk of Méliès's subjects; even productions which purported to be real, like his reportage of the Dreyfus affair, were extensively manipulated, staged fabrications – what he called “artificially arranged scenes.”¹²⁰ Méliès pointedly emphasized his break with the Lumière style in an advertisement of 1897: his “fantastic or artistic scenes” constituted a “special genre which differs entirely from the customary views supplied by the cinematograph – street scenes or scenes of everyday life.”¹²¹

Almost from the cinema's inception, then, an anti-naturalistic tradition stood opposed to a mimetic one.¹²² Yet despite the enormous popularity of the anti-naturalistic tradition that Méliès invented, the early critical reception of film focused almost exclusively on the cinema's powers of verisimilitude.

Critics of avant-garde art had no use for mimesis. They consequently either rejected cinema, by maintaining a consistent position with their art reviews, or they enjoyed cinema, by assuming that what was appropriate to lowly films had no place in the rarified realms of painting. Fundamental to Symbolist aesthetics was a belief that photography was an enemy of art. G.-Albert Aurier, Maurice Denis, and others appropriated and intensified Baudelaire's attacks on photography as a scourge of creativity, as a brute mechanism for literal mimesis that precluded any participation by the transforming mind or eye.¹²³ For these critics, photography was nothing less than one of the many debased products of a materialistic society. They denounced all arts that aspired to “reproduce” or “imitate” so-called “natural” truth, and they disdained all

144a (facing page) Louis Lumière, *Arrival of a Train*, 1895, Film Stills Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

aesthetic techniques, such as *trompe-l'oeil*, that were used to those ends.¹²⁴ Artists, they maintained, should create a “higher reality” analogous to nature rather than replicate nature.¹²⁵ Out of the multiple, “fugitive appearances” of the phenomenal world, they should distill an iconic essence.¹²⁶

From the moment the Lumière brothers unveiled their *cinématographe* in Lyons in 1895, journalists who wrote on the cinema reveled in its mimetic powers – something that was anathema to any Symbolist vision of art.¹²⁷ The first reviews, published locally in *Le Progrès*, marveled at the fact that one could witness scenes in “natural scale” and in limitless space; that one could “reproduce [. . .] an entire street [. . .] with striking truth [. . . and] mathematical fidelity.”¹²⁸ Adopting a current stage term, one reviewer described the Lumière shorts as “10 *tableaux vivants*,” going on to say that they were “animated by an absolutely intense life: men walking, leaping, tramways rolling in such a way that one had the absolute illusion of reality.”¹²⁹ A critic in *La Poste* wrote:

This screen is visible to a crowd. A photographic projection appears on the screen. Nothing new in that. But suddenly the image, lifesized or reduced according to the dimension of the stage, *becomes animated and comes alive*. [. . .] *It is life itself*. [. . .] It is movement imitated with great truth. [. . .] Photography has ceased fixing immobility. It perpetuates the image of movement.¹³⁰

Through the late nineteenth century and into the next, journalists continued to marvel at the cinema’s qualities of absolute reproduction, movement, and instantaneity.¹³¹ Yet one reviewer, at least, writing in the *Petit Bleu* on 23 June 1902, was dismayed that this mimetic power could be abused by deceiving the public into believing that what they saw on the screen was real, when actually it was the artifice of the film maker: an unnamed film maker (actually Méliès) had already practiced such a deception. Advance billing for *The Coronation of Edward VII* presented it as the authentic filmed reportage of the imminent event, “taken from life,” which would be “immediately reproduced” for enthusiastic subjects at the music halls. Yet our reviewer complained that despite meticulous attention to detail, with authentic costumes and a master of royal ceremonies brought over from England to coach the exactly replicated sequence of events – “la vérité avant tout” – the unnamed film maker would be duping Londoners with a production staged in a Parisian suburb. The elegant chairs were really just cardboard, “solemn” Edward a brewer in fancy dress, his queen a “fairy queen” at the popular Théâtre du Châtelet. Extremes of “high” and “low” played off outrageously against each other.¹³²

This exposé, written in a tone that seems at least partly ironic, took a full column on the front page, one column away from an even longer discussion of the real event, which included, among other things, a detailed portrayal of the ceremony and its décor.¹³³ In the piece on the fake ceremony, the journalist had written: “Le public, qui voit évoluer les personnages dans un cadre approprié, ou a peu près, est dupe du décor et de la mise en scène.”¹³⁴

Remy de Gourmont wrote the first extended discussion of cinema as a medium in an issue of the *Mercure de France* (1 October 1907).¹³⁵ A Symbolist poet and novelist, Gourmont was evidently enthralled by just those life-like qualities that he had denounced elsewhere in the arts of painting and poetry.¹³⁶ He would have felt free to praise these qualities of the mimetic cinema precisely because the cinema was not Art. Cinema surpassed all other spectacles, he wrote, not only for its ability to reproduce movement in nature “à merveille” and at reasonable cost, but also for its unique power to locate coherent illusions in authentic settings: to reproduce a hippopotamus race on the banks of the Nile itself, with “natives and animals all evolving in their proper milieu.”¹³⁷ Productions of such scenes in even the best theaters, he added, are merely “caricatures” by comparison.¹³⁸ “Such is the power of the illusion that a pho-

tograph projected on the screen can rouse our passions as effectively as reality.”¹³⁹ In Rouen “le bon public des samedis” cheered the heroes, booed the villains and threw lumps of sugar at dogs on the screen – as though the fictive images were truly alive.¹⁴⁰ (Gourmont described the audiences’ reaction to films in essentially the terms that had been applied to mimetic art since Zeuxis and his grapes.)

While the avant-garde Gourmont praised these mimetic capabilities, as did writers for “la grande presse,” he also described how the new medium was exploited – whether consciously or not – to heighten the effects of reality, or even to go beyond it.¹⁴¹ Rapid scene changes in even banal stories, for example, could “augment the impression of life”; the transparency of projected colored photographs “is nature itself, with perhaps too much brilliance.”¹⁴² Rather than revel in a Symbolist artificiality, he hoped that the more natural coloring could replace uniform white skin tones: “then one will be very close to perfection.”¹⁴³

Because of its mimetic powers, the cinema could create convincing illusions of events which are impossible in nature. In a statement which evokes the experience of actual film sequences from early programs, Gourmont wrote:

I love the cinema. It satisfies my curiosity. With it I go around the world, and stop, at will, at Tokyo, at Singapore. I follow the craziest itineraries. I go to New York, which isn’t beautiful, via Suez, which is hardly more so, and *in the same hour* I travel through the forests of Canada and the mountains of Scotland; I go up the Nile to Khartoum and, *an instant later*, from the deck of a transatlantic steamer, I contemplate the bleak expanse of the ocean.¹⁴⁴

In stressing the cinema’s ability to transcend earthly boundaries of space and time within a single work or viewing experience, Gourmont’s passage uncannily presages the classic – effectively cinematic – definition of Cubist painting that Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger offered in their *Du Cubisme* (1912):

Without using any allegorical or symbolic literary artifice, nothing except inflections of lines and colors, a painter can show *in the same tableau* a town in China, a town in France, and mountains, seas, fauna and flora, people with their own histories and desires, *everything that is separated in exterior reality*. Distance or time, concrete thing or pure concept, everything can be expressed in the language of the painter. . . .¹⁴⁵

Although Gleizes and Metzinger included aesthetic elements like lines and colors, as well as a much wider range of experience, the terms in which they praised Cubism are essentially the same as those used by Gourmont to praise the cinema.

Many early critics of Cubism emphasized that it synthesized disparate views or images, and was radical because of its dynamism and essentially temporal nature – all qualities that were also inherent in film. Yet, they almost never made the connection explicit, and even attacked the cinema on Symbolist grounds. Léon Werth (1910), Jean Metzinger (1911), Maurice Raynal (1913), Guillaume Apollinaire (1913), and Charles Lacoste (1913) praised Cubism at the expense of mere “photographic reproduction.”¹⁴⁶ In dozens of early reviews of Cubism, the word “cinema” hardly appears at all; when it does, it almost always stands for all that Cubism rejects. In 1911, for example, Roger Allard praised Cubism as “the exact opposite” of “the Impressionist cinematograph.”¹⁴⁷ Cubist works, “instead of copy-ing nature [. . .] present the essential elements of a synthesis situated in time.”¹⁴⁸ In the course of his attack against “the decadence of illusionistic painting,” Olivier-Hourcade wrote that “the cinematograph in color” – even more than photography or the precisely detailed works of academic painters like Cormon – was “le dernier perfectionnement de l’Ecole des Beaux-Arts.”¹⁴⁹ He completed his insult by adding that the perfection of the Beaux-Arts was not art at all: “Mais le cinématographe ne fut, n’est pas encore, même

officiellement, de l'art plastique."¹⁵⁰ Apollinaire, the critic and poet closest to Picasso, made one of the few explicit connections between the idea of the "cinematic" and what by then was a standard definition of Cubism. "The goal of this cinematic art," he wrote in a 1911 review of Metzinger in 1911, "is to show us plastic truth in all its aspects, without renouncing the benefits of perspective."¹⁵¹ (It is striking he made the analogy in terms of the derivative Metzinger, not Picasso.) But after making this connection once, Apollinaire never returned to it. A year later, André Salmon, another friend, characterized the fundamental breakthrough of *Les Demoiselles* in abstracted, cinematic terms: "geometrical signs – of a geometry at once infinitesimal and cinematic – appeared as the principal element" of Picasso's "painting-as-equation," whose depicted figures were "white ciphers on the blackboard."¹⁵²

All the earliest critics who took Cubism's part, including Apollinaire and Salmon, adopted an extreme Symbolist position that art should stand at the greatest possible remove from the phenomenal world.¹⁵³ For them, Cubist works were nothing less than "pure painting," animated by "fundamental laws" and the "primacy of conception" in their making. They invoked philosophers such as Kant and Nietzsche in terms which often were so abstractly theoretical that a reader might suppose that real Cubist paintings on canvases never existed.

The most ardent and consistent partisan of this viewpoint was Raynal, who also wrote the first regular film column, which appeared in the *Soirées de Paris*, the avant-garde weekly that Apollinaire edited. In Raynal's lengthy discussions of Cubist art, with their ubiquitous stress on the "reality of conception," there is absolutely no indication that he even knew the cinema had been invented, let alone that he was one of its most passionate early followers.¹⁵⁴ His writings on art suggest that he was completely unaware that he may have been responding to a comparable sensibility in both Cubism and the cinema. Raynal's "chroniques cinématographiques" of 1913–14 address a dramatically different range of issues in a tone diametrically opposed to that of the reviews of Cubist painting he was writing at the same time. For Art, Raynal explicated abstract ideas in lofty, rather philosophical language. For film, he went slumming with gusto.

He described the bohemian allure of watching films in marginal environments, like that of the American Californy Vitograph Company, near the Place Pigalle, where sexual license and a general flouting of conventions obtained:

First of all, no intermissions. A continuous spectacle; one can see the same thing several times, [. . .] No lighted hall (the lighted hall is a stupid invention), yet one is seated comfortably enough; delicious tarts come there to be able to practice those poses which relative obscurity favors; the little electric flashlights of the usherettes, who all are pretty, sometimes intercept hands upon legs and other places; one can smoke, one can drink; the orchestra plays "deliciously out of tune, *on purpose*," at least we hope so, etc. etc.¹⁵⁵

While Raynal extolled the pure "reality of conception" in Cubist painting, the realities he liked in film were considerably earthier in nature – whether a woman's "pretty forms glimpsed under her wet and clinging dress,"¹⁵⁶ or battle scenes of "vrais chevaux vraiment tués" which, he continued, are so thrillingly real that one has to ask oneself if the extras were killed too, "tellement leurs chutes sont 'nature'."

Raynal reveled in the cinema's ability to create fantasy. After describing a Méliès-inspired film, where unattached shoes "dance sarabandes, converse, embrace, pose [. . . and] climb on tables" – in other words, where "trucs" create the illusion of impossible events – he affirmed, "C'est dans ce sens que le cinéma pourrait, peut-être, créer quelque chose."¹⁵⁷

The same Raynal who championed the high seriousness of Cubist painting also appreciated the sheer ludicrousness and subversiveness of cinema. In a film about a famous eight-year-old musical prodigy, acted by someone “who couldn’t be more than fifteen,” the most unexpected sounds resulted from the *cinémathèque*’s musical accompaniment to the violinist playing silently on the screen: “Because the orchestra of the Palace is composed solely of a mechanical piano, this violinist played the piano with a violin.”¹⁵⁸ Raynal also praised other broken rules and subverted expectations, like outrageous spelling errors and what he claimed were the accompanist’s intentionally wrong notes.¹⁵⁹ (Here he was ironically imputing defiant, heretical intention to performers who were merely incompetent.) And Raynal cheered the films of Fantômas, the most dastardly law-breaker of them all.¹⁶⁰

In his film reviews, Raynal often adopted an ironic and sarcastic tone utterly absent from his art criticism, or from the films themselves. He commended the Americans for the “restraint” of their battle scenes, before describing what he saw in gory detail.¹⁶¹ By reading lips, he could watch the “painful” sight of actors swearing at each other, at gloriously inappropriate moments. Or by reading lips, he could be “enchanted” by their “thrilling” dialogue of unspeakable bourgeois banality, as when a miserable wife confronts her gambling husband with, “Look, you wretch, at the poverty to which your fatal passion has reduced us. Gone, the apartment with every comfort; gone, the central heating!”¹⁶² Not everyone in the theater would have found these funny, or noticed the disjunctions between actions and mouthed but unheard words. Raynal viewed these banal works through the prism of a heretical, disjunctive sensibility.

All of this – a fascination with a popular, even *louche* world, an outlaw medium, comic violence, anti-naturalism, irony, and biting humor – rings true to the aesthetics of Cubist art, far truer, one could argue, than Raynal’s own art criticism. The popular context of Cubist art would have been evident to readers of the *Soirées de Paris*, who saw reproductions of Picasso’s assemblages scattered through pages filled not only with Raynal’s film reviews, but with articles on the Nick Carter detective series “Images populaires du XIXe siècle, 1890” and baseball.

PICASSO AND THE FLICKERS

Picasso, like everyone else, knew about the *cinématographe* by the time he began to paint his first Cubist works. The Lumières had sent a projectionist to Barcelona within six months of their first showing in Paris,¹⁶³ and films, including those of Méliès, continued to be shown there. Even before Picasso left Barcelona, writers in his circle made use of cinematographic analogies. In an unsigned letter from Paris in *Pèl & Ploma* (15 July 1899), Miquel Utrillo compared his experience of bustling Paris to film, by using rhythmically repeating sounds and a series of active verbs: in Catalan, “semblo una *película* de cinematograf, anant, pujant, baixant, corrent, rodant, saltant, mirant” (it seemed like a moving picture, going, climbing, descending, running, rolling, leaping, looking).¹⁶⁴

By 1907, the year of Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger*, cinemas had proliferated throughout Paris – cinema had become the subject of fiction and cinematic metaphors had extended from the street fair to the academic lecture hall.¹⁶⁵ Apollinaire did not mention photography or the cinema in his early work or in his journal the *Festin d’Esopo* (1902–03), or in *Vers et prose*, which he edited with André Salmon between 1905 and 1906. In 1907, however, he wrote a short story about cinema. “Un Beau Film,” published in *Messidor* on 23 December 1907, can be read as an elaborate spoof on the genre of *actualités reconstituées*, which Méliès invented. Indeed it may have been a specific parodic response to Méliès’s film of the preceding year, and its adver-

145 Picasso, *Self-Portrait*,
in Paris, 1901, oil on canvas,
81 × 60 cm., Musée Picasso, Paris.



tising premise.¹⁶⁶ Méliès advertised his *History of a crime* with the following: “This drama is unfortunately real and we are going to give a faithful and exact reproduction of it in all its details.”¹⁶⁷ Apollinaire pretended to go one step further. Writing in an invented persona, he described how he started a film company and decided to orchestrate a murder, in order to reproduce not merely a staged simulation of a sensational crime, but a literally real one. Despite the seemingly straightforward narration and wealth of details on the “real” double murder (the enormously successful film, and its aftermath), we never forget for a moment that his story is pure fiction.¹⁶⁸

In that same year of 1907, Henri Bergson published his monumental *L'Evolution créatrice*, in which he abandoned the purely biological vitalistic metaphors of his earlier work and made cinema the explicit, driving metaphor of his philosophical system. The last quarter of his book draws an analogy between the cinema’s method of dynamically and artificially “recomposing” successive discontinuous elements into a continuous abstracted whole, and the “becoming” which informs the basic processes of “perception, intellection, [and] language.”¹⁶⁹ The *Mercure de France* reviewed it immediately, and singled out its last cinematic chapter for praise.¹⁷⁰

A number of Picasso's friends and acquaintances who predated Cubism testified, years after the fact, that he was familiar with the cinema even before 1907. (Picasso, of course, already had a long-standing fascination with magic, circuses, cabarets, and other forms of marginal popular culture, which has been richly documented elsewhere.¹⁷¹) And, as we have seen, he came through a series of cultures, some of which identified the "popular" with commodities and with the machine made; and he came through a series of cultures in which images – whether holy *imágenes* or *ombres chinoises* – moved. In these later writings, it is significant that Picasso's friends, Raynal among them, emphasized the cinema's "low" aspect, or made specific reference to Méliès. They never mentioned the Lumières, nor did they have anything to say about the quality of mimesis which was associated with the cinematic tradition the Lumières began.

In his memoir of the Blue Period years, around 1904, André Warnod recalled "the evenings when Picasso followed his faithful friend Max Jacob to the little cinema on the rue de Douai, which specialized in the innocent and silent *féeries* of good old Méliès, as well as films of ingeniously frenetic cowboys."¹⁷² In his reminiscences of "Montmartre au temps du 'Bateau-Lavoir,'" Raynal included "the droll dramas of the first cinematic gang" along with other diversions such as "the buffooning of clowns, the little films of Charlie Chaplin, [and] comic singers" among the favorite pastimes: they were "all manifestations which constantly opposed the obstinate quest for surprise to traditional sentimentality."¹⁷³ Writing of the Blue Period, André Salmon, a close friend of Picasso and early champion of Cubism, remembered that "at the time I'm speaking of, the cinema wasn't merely in its infancy, it was howling. However, we didn't have to wait long for Méliès to appear, and after that the first actors of the screen."¹⁷⁴ Salmon added that he and Apollinaire "explored Montmartre like two tourists [. . .] with the help [. . . of] Picasso [and] Max Jacob," who during these years shared the same apartment.¹⁷⁵

Even as he distanced himself from the spectacle with a condescending stance, Salmon also reported that Jacob repeatedly persuaded him to attend an outdoor cinema in the rue de Douai: "maybe Max Jacob believed a little in this progress (no need to admire it in order to believe in it), to which I was never much devoted."¹⁷⁶ After speculating that Jacob may or may not have been pretending to find "le cinéma de l'âge Méliès" truly exciting, Salmon concluded that, while there was no evidence of this passion in Jacob's work, he may well have been interested, because later, in 1913, he joined the society which Apollinaire and Picasso had founded in honor of the movie criminal, Fantômas.¹⁷⁷ Salmon concluded the anecdote by proudly asserting that he himself had never joined in the foolishness favored by Picasso, Jacob, and Apollinaire.¹⁷⁸

Salmon's skepticism about Jacob's interest in the cinema is especially puzzling, since he certainly knew that Jacob's second ecstatic vision of Christ took place in December 1914 at a *cinématographe*, and that Jacob later wrote "Le Christ au cinématographe" in ironic self-defense:

Donc, la première fois Tu vins dans ma maison.
Et la seconde fois au Cinématographe . . .
"Vous allez donc alors au cinématographe?"
Me dit un confesseur, la mine confondue.
"Eh mon Père! Le Seigneur n'y est-il pas venu?"

Well, the first time You came to my house.
And the second time, to the Cinematographe . . .
"So you go to the cinematograph?"
A confessor says to me, with a confounded expression.
"Hey my Father! Didn't the Lord Himself come there?"¹⁷⁹

In his deadly serious parody, an ultimate convergence of “high” and “low,” Jacob recast the Gospels for modern times. As Christ, implicitly, fraternized with lowly fishermen and whores, so he chose to visit Jacob at seedy flickers “dans la rue” – a transgression Jacob made central to his very identity.

For some, however, the dichotomy of “high” and “low” was unbridgeable. It is not surprising that Picasso’s biographers, particularly Kahnweiler and others who followed him, did not see a connection between Picasso and the cinema.¹⁸⁰ (Most of Picasso’s biographers have included the critically sanctioned alternative tradition to high art of hand-made, exotic, or regional “primitive” arts.¹⁸¹) Some historians, especially of film and culture, have noted a shared concern with simultaneity, and the striking general similarity between the scintillating surfaces of monochromatic Analytic Cubist paintings and the flickering, often monochromatic images of early films, made with wobbly hand-held projectors (see, for example, fig. 227).¹⁸² But few art historians have addressed this.¹⁸³ The language of Cubism obviously derives in large measure from Cézanne, and many have refused to acknowledge anything that might detract from what they felt was the historical primacy of Cézanne in the lineage of modernism, and from their sense of Picasso – or Braque – as the hero who carried his sacred torch.¹⁸⁴

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES: FROM MÉLIÈS TO CUBISM

Many of Cubism’s most radical features are scarcely discernible in the work of Cézanne or any other of his contemporaries; some are not present at all.¹⁸⁵ Cézanne practiced none of Cubism’s extreme fragmentation of bodies or isolated body parts, nor did he insert real objects, advertising copy, letters, or numbers into his artistic contexts; his use of multiple perspectives is often softened and harmonized almost to the point of concealment. Analogously, while Redon included hovering heads and other body fragments in his prints and paintings, they are shrouded in mysterious, dream-like mists and a gossamer web of literary allusions.¹⁸⁶ But all of these hallmarks of Cubism – as well as a self-conscious dialogue between apparent art and apparent reality – were explicitly present in the films of Georges Méliès and in popular visual culture at large. Méliès’s more prosaic, explicit, literal, and *comic* handling was far closer to a Cubist sensibility, despite the obvious differences between his visual style and that of Picasso.

Méliès’s films are compendia of the visual themes of late nineteenth-century popular entertainment. Méliès was quintessentially and insistently modern. He exploited the most modern technology, built films around the latest dance crazes and – from circuses, *féeries*, music halls, and theaters like the Châtelet and Folies-Bergère – hired the most popular celebrities, mimes, and acrobats as his stars.¹⁸⁷ His films generally start with a stock theme, a well-known plot, a startling visual effect, from magic acts and other popular spectacles – used first in a familiar way, then in complex or unexpected ways possible only in film. His editing techniques allowed him to accomplish feats that could never be performed with the earlier theatrical arsenal of magic chests, stage traps, pulleys, and magic lanterns; and the medium allowed him to bring his variety of magic to a far larger audience than he could have reached from the stage.¹⁸⁸ Méliès’s cinema was the most elaborate example of comparable popular amusements based upon movement, such as flip cards, panoramas, magic lanterns, and animated drawings. His early films continued to be shown into the early Cubist years.



146 (above left) Georges Méliès, *Mysterious Dislocations*, 1901, National Film Archive, London.

147 (above right) Georges Méliès, *Mysterious Dislocations*, 1901, National Film Archive, London.

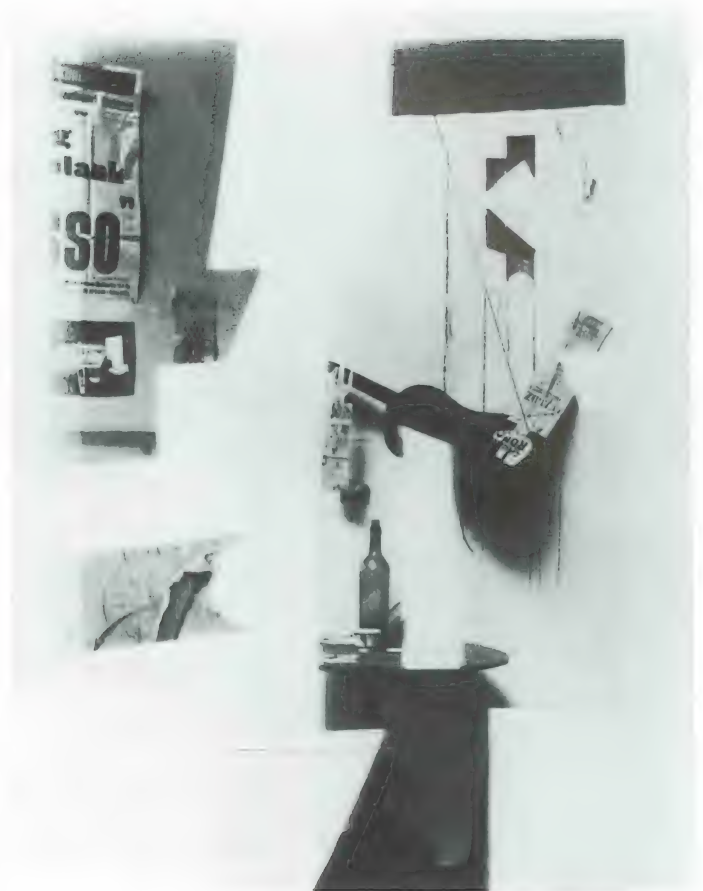
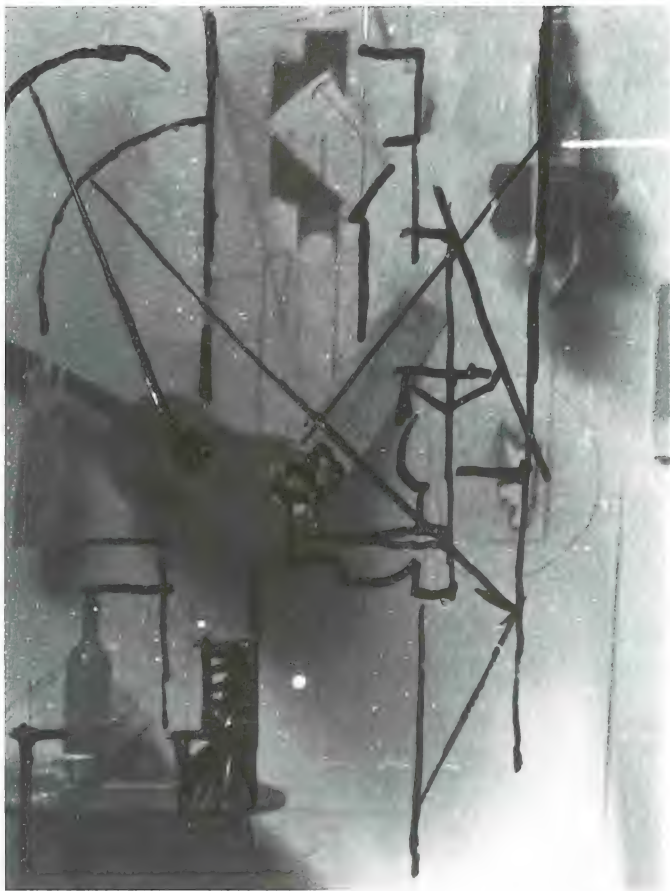
148 Georges Méliès, *Mysterious Dislocations*, 1901, National Film Archive, London.

In his films, Méliès was ubiquitous, engaged in virtually every level of production. In his own words, he “conceived the ideas, painted the backgrounds, devised the accessories,” and usually starred in his “personal creations.”¹⁸⁹ He directed his works, co-invented the Kinétograph movie camera and either invented or most extravagantly exploited a range of cinematic “trucs” – shooting and editing techniques which involved the extensive manipulation of celluloid after it had been exposed. Among his most daring was “stop-action,” where he cut and spliced different frames of film together and thus magically could appear to elide time or to effect sudden metamorphoses.¹⁹⁰

Among Méliès’s favorite effects was the fragmentation and reassembling of human bodies. In his *Mysterious Dislocations* of 1901, Pierrot dances on to a stage, sits down, then spies a glass and bottle at a distance.¹⁹¹ He does not stand up to walk towards them. Instead, his right arm separates from his body, floats over toward the table and takes the bottle, while his left arm separates to grab the glass. His arms serve his drink and, because he apparently no longer needs them, float off again. When Pierrot realizes that he has nothing to light his pipe with, his head makes its way over to a nearby candle. Suddenly all his appendages fly away from his unsupported torso, which drops to the floor. After his legs, arms, and head return, Pierrot, now whole again, dances with delight. Then he takes off his head and sits on it (figs. 146–48).

In 1913, some years after he had invented and begun to explore the Cubist language, Picasso made and photographed an assemblage which recalls Méliès’s film (fig. 149). On a large canvas, he drew an abstracted, barely indicated Cubist “figure,” then





attached, in more or less the correct place, large schematic – clearly detachable – arms (cut from newsprint, with advertisements) and below, set a real table, real wine bottle, real cup, and real pipe. Picasso made the image emphatically his own with a sly reference to his name (the huge “SSO” on a poster), with his art (his pictures tacked on and stacked against a wall), by giving his figure a real guitar to play, and by his aesthetic audacity – his radical style and his own radical new medium.¹⁹² In a sequence of his images, Picasso magically transformed his original photograph, drawing another Cubist pattern over it with crude ink lines, or masking parts of the negative before he printed it, to create new positive and negative shapes, apparently broken into pieces (figs. 150 and 151).¹⁹³ Years later, in his *Painter and Model* (1964, fig. 152), Picasso remembered the film even more explicitly. At his easel, an artist paints – the magician’s workings now are visible – as he creates a woman who breaks floatingly into pieces, like the Méliès, against a dark ground.¹⁹⁴

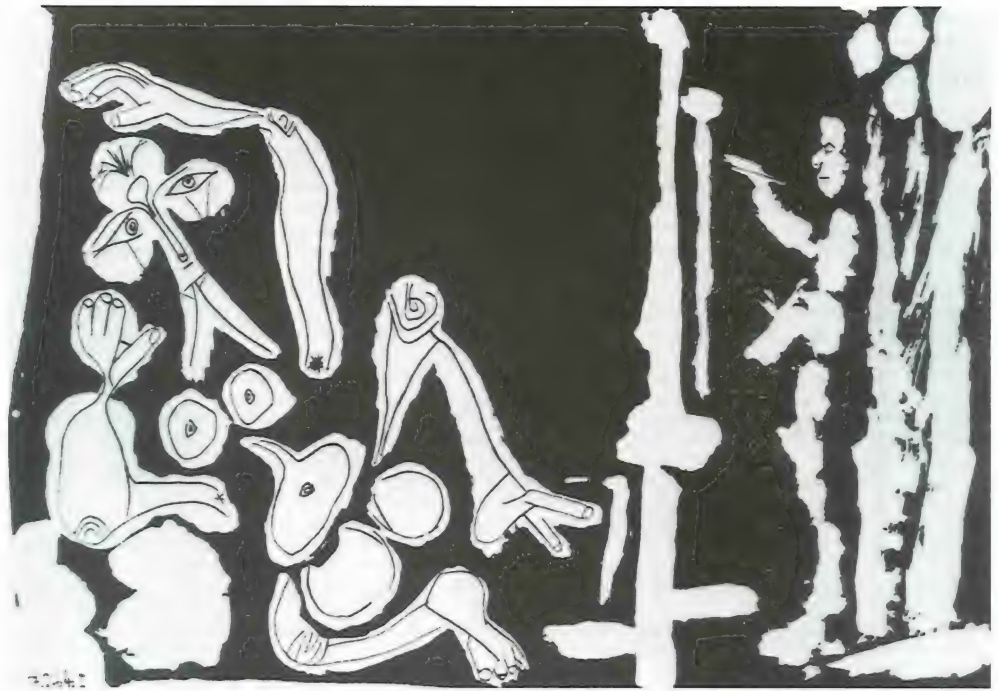
In one of his films, *The Infernal Cake Walk* (1903), Méliès kicked off his legs in the midst of his vigorous rendition of the then popular dance.¹⁹⁵ In another, *The Man with a Rubber Head* (1902, fig. 153), he used a bellows to inflate his own head to gargantuan proportions.¹⁹⁶ In still other films, Méliès broke apart bodies and reassembled them as strange hybrids. In *Up-to-date Surgery* (1902), a doctor cuts off a patient’s arms, legs, and head, and when he tries to repair him, in Méliès’s words, “a leg is placed where an arm should be and vice versa,” before he gets it right and the patient is whole once more.¹⁹⁷

These images of body fragments drew on a broad and widely accessible visual tradition. A highlight of many nineteenth-century magic acts was the spectacle of dismemberment, where the audience could witness a body being hacked to pieces by saw, sword, or scimitar, then put back together again. A famous practitioner of

150 (above left) Picasso, *Photographic Composition with “Construction with Guitarist”*, 1913, cropped gelatin silverprint with ink drawing, 7.8 × 5.8 cm., private collection.

151 (above right) Picasso, *Photographic Composition with “Construction with Guitarist”*, 1913, masked gelatin silverprint, 11.4 × 8.8 cm., private collection.

149 (facing page) Picasso, *Photographic Composition with “Construction with Guitarist”*, 1913, gelatin silverprint, 11.8 × 8.7 cm., private collection.



this comic horror was Dr. H. S. Lynn, who dazzled audiences in Paris and in London, where Méliès first saw him. According to a program for his act, he was “THE VIVISECTIONIST”:¹⁹⁸

The World's Wonder Worker and Mankind's Mirth Maker.
He Actually Cuts Men Up!

Beheads, Dismembers and passes them round for examination, and then, with graceful ease, restores them better than ever!

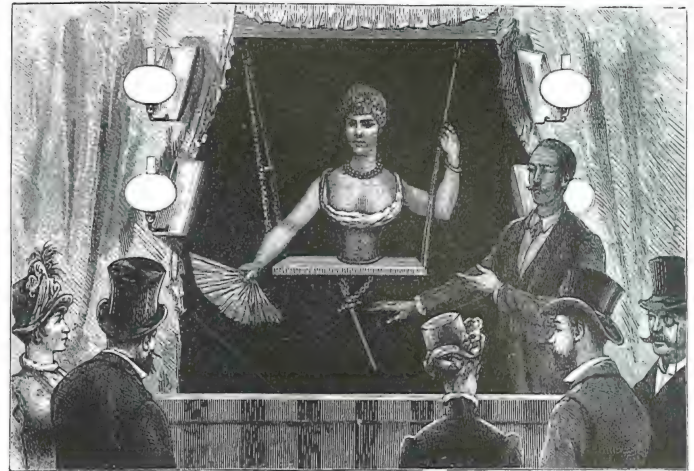
In spite of the Horrible idea of the experiment, he Convulses the Audience with laughter,

As roar after roar will testify . . .

A favorite in foreign lands.¹⁹⁹

In Paris and throughout Europe, magicians presented other images of body fragments, like the same Dr. Lynn's “Parisian sensation” of the “mysterious half woman.”²⁰⁰ A somewhat earlier magician had specialized in “nose amputations” performed on bemused members of the audience – “large noses preferred,” the poster said.²⁰¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the visual culture of magic – and popular culture at large – specialized in images of severed heads.²⁰² A poster for Méliès's Théâtre Robert Houdin from 1891, five years before he started making films, features a magic act where a headless professor runs after someone carrying his head.²⁰³ For years before the invention of film, performers exploited magic lanterns, slanting cabinets, and mirrors to create the illusion of living severed heads. These entertainments, seen even at the Folies-Bergère, were common enough to be explained to the public in articles and diagrams in the widely read science journal *La Nature* (fig. 154).²⁰⁴ The Musée Grévin waxworks included five death masks, “cast from nature,” presumably after the guillotine had done its work, of “the great figures of the Revolution,” including Mirabeau, Marat, and Robespierre.²⁰⁵ And in Montmartre, throughout the Cubist years, a continuing popular form of entertainment was the public spectacle of real guillotine executions, where the audience could watch M. Deibler, the public executioner, use the guillotine to sever heads that could never be restored.²⁰⁶



Méliès and Cubist artists used similar proceedings, but in different ways. When the Vivisectionist hacked a body into pieces, or when Méliès made Pierrot's arms float away from his body, the divisions occurred in logical places, and all the parts clearly originated from a single whole body. The magician, after passing appendages around, or making them act in seemingly spontaneous ways, or momentarily reattaching them in the wrong place, would finally reassemble the parts to form a body exactly as it was to begin with. Using a favorite term from the programs of magic shows, the parts were "restored" to the whole, and temporary comic disorder was restored to an original coherent state.

Picasso took the idea of dislocation in a different direction, depriving it, as it were, of "comic" resolution. When in *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907, fig. 111) Picasso used his brush to create the illusion of breaking bodies into pieces, the breaks often were arbitrary and inconsistent; while most parts are still legible, in some places the pink or salmon fragments no longer approximate to a single, specific anatomical element. Moreover, Picasso fragmented not merely a single body in an otherwise coherent space, but shattered the whole environment as well.

In later Cubist pictures, Picasso inserted isolated elements, incongruous bits, parts, and pieces, such as a goofy mustache, or double curve of ear, or single larger-than-life-size eye. These are body parts without a body, fragments set in arbitrary relation to each other, and the field they occupy – painted planes or bits of paper or newsprint cut in pieces – is similarly fragmented. Like the spectacle presented by the Vivisectionist and by Méliès, all the phases of Cubism depended fundamentally upon dismemberment, but on a dismemberment now become pervasive and irreversible.

As with the human body, so too with spatial vistas. For some years before Picasso made different points of view conflict emphatically in his Cubist works, Méliès had been exploiting jarringly different perspectives within the same image. In *The Human Fly* (1902), Méliès, wearing a Cossack tunic, dances a wild *Kazatsky* on the floor, then runs toward the wall and, defying gravity, crawls straight up it at a right angle to the women still standing on the floor.²⁰⁷ Next, still on the vertical wall, he somersaults, does the splits, walks on his hands, and then race-walks down the wall exactly perpendicular to the women who point admiringly to him (figs. 155–57). The illusion is of a single perspective with an impossible event, but the viewer effectively perceives two conflicting, disconcerting perspectives at once – a horizontal perspective with the women standing on the floor and a vertical perspective looking down at Méliès.

Yet again Méliès drew on popular entertainment for his ideas and images. His trick photography made use of techniques that had been widely explained and illustrated

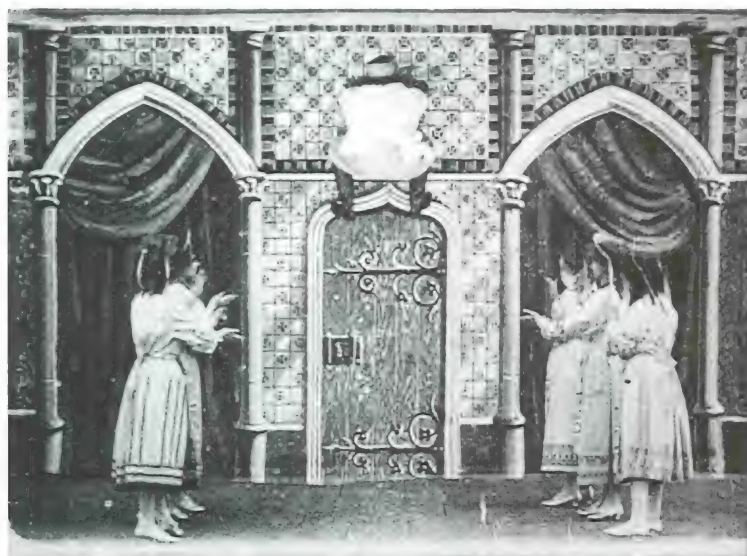
153 (above left) Georges Méliès, *Man with a Rubber Head*, 1902, Film Stills Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

154 (above right) *La Femme sans corps: Aspect de l'expérience exécutée au Théâtre des Folies-Bergère, à Paris*, from G. Kerlus, "La Science au théâtre: Deux nouvelles illusions d'optique," *La Nature*, 27 September 1884, 269.

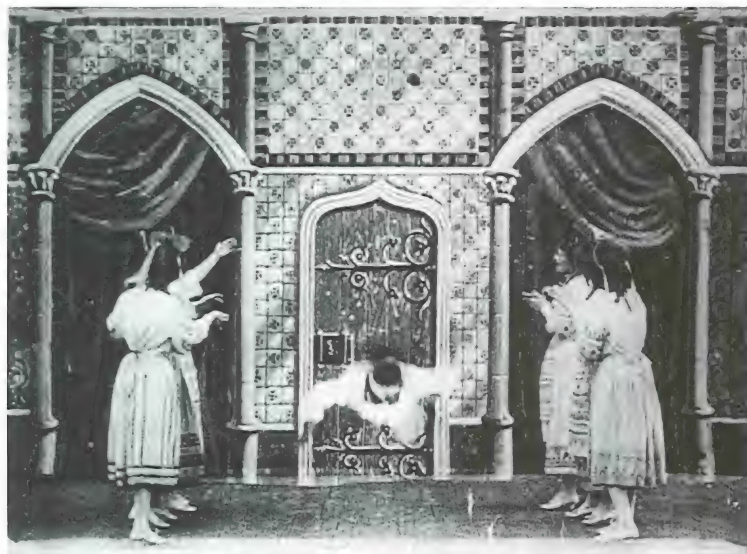
155 Georges Méliès, *The Human Fly*, 1902, Paper Print Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



156 Georges Méliès, *The Human Fly*, 1902, Paper Print Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



157 Georges Méliès, *The Human Fly*, 1902, Paper Print Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



in *La Nature* and other popular journals. Photographers had used mirrors to make “multiphotographs,” which created a simultaneous back, front, and side view. They now also exploited a black ground and multiple exposure to make “composite” photographs: these could create simultaneous multiple images of the same person, enabling a man to look at a second, very much larger version of his own head; they could also create different perspectives within the same image – strange hybrids, like a head composed of two profiles facing opposite directions (fig. 158).²⁰⁸

For all the frenzied acrobatics in *The Human Fly*, each of the conflicting perspectives, the vertical and horizontal, remains coherent in itself, and the relation between the two remains constant. With the “multi” and “composite” photographs as well, the ludicrous shifts of perspective or scale, and even the placement of individual elements, are invariably set within a stable and coherent illusion. By contrast, in Picasso’s Cubist works, the conflicting relationships between objects and parts of objects are invariably unstable and improbable, and are set within inconsistent illusions.

In *Méditations esthétiques: Les Peintres cubistes* (1913), Apollinaire applauded Picasso’s radical insertion of “numbers [and] block letters” in his art, as “new in art, but long steeped in humanity.”²⁰⁹ In fact, Méliès had been using letters, numbers, and word fragments, as well as advertising copy, for some time. In *The Melomaniac* (1903), a row of electrical wires becomes an enormous musical staff when Méliès the conductor tosses up a huge treble clef, then adds his conductor’s baton as the bar line (fig. 159). To write notes on the staff, he repeatedly plucks his head off his shoulders (a new one regenerates instantly) and throws it on to its proper place, where it begins to sing the note. Words like “re” and “si” on placards held by a child underneath each note function with the position of the notes on the staff to indicate the relevant pitch name. In *A Mix-up in the Gallery* (1906), Méliès used the names of his colleagues “Micho” and “Claudel” in a sly, allusive way, plastering them



158 Facsimilé d’une [...] photographie amusante représentant deux fois le même profil, obtenue par M. Duc, de Grenoble, from Albert Londe, “La Photographie pratique: Le Fond russe – Photographie amusante,” *La Nature*, 6 August 1887, 152.



159 Georges Méliès *The Melomaniac*, 1903, Les Amis de Georges Méliès, Paris.

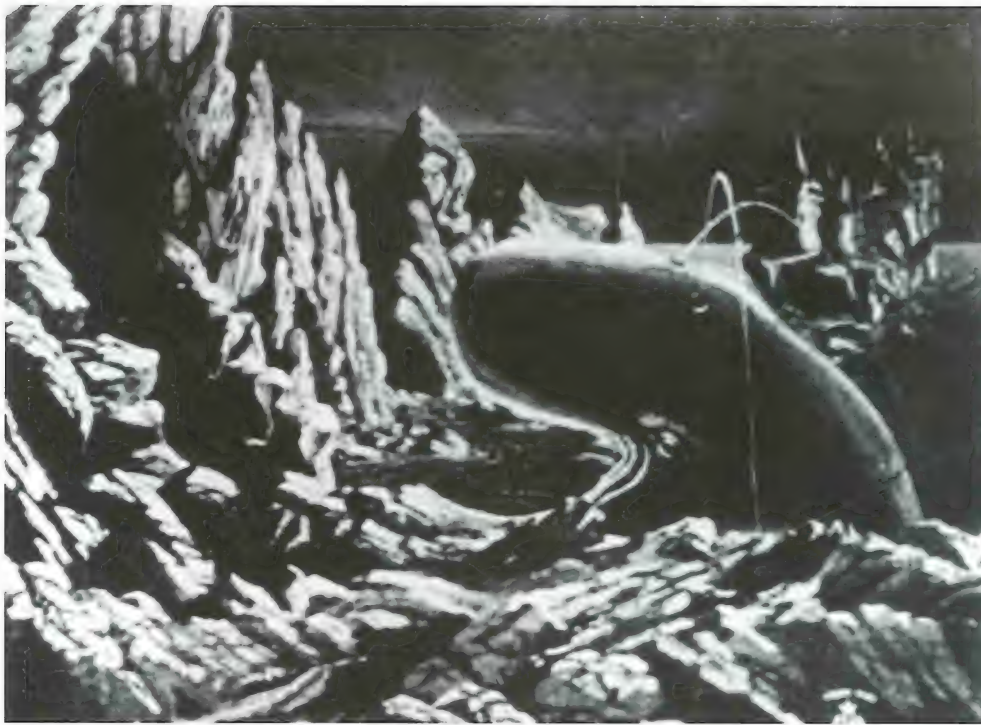


as posters on a wall. In another film, a man plasters a wall of advertising posters, including one for yummy “Quinine Water au caca” (fig. 160). In his advertising films – the first ever made and just as magical as his other films – words work like conventional advertising copy, denoting specific products and their attributes. Even when the letters on a blackboard began in a random sequence, completely out of order, on their sides or upside down – as in a lost publicity short made for “Moutarde Bornibus” (c. 1896–1900) – they ultimately fell into place to reveal the mustard’s then familiar advertising slogan. The audiences, Méliès later claimed, would be “convulsed with laughter.”²¹⁰

Once again, Cubist images complicate this technique. Unlike the univocal use of words in Méliès, where “si” refers to the note “si” (B natural) on the staff, or “Micho” refers to his colleague offstage, Cubist works set words at odds with the objects they supposedly describe. Even if the word is fully legible, Cubist meanings invariably are multivalent: “KUB” refers to the brand name of a popular bouillon cube, as it playfully puns on the cubes of Cubism. Picasso used texts to carry multiple meanings and messages: a newspaper clipping from the business pages depicts a siphon; or a heading on the Balkan Wars reads as a bit of bottle.²¹¹

THE REAL AND THE FAKE

Historical accounts of Cubism have always emphasized the break that occurred when Picasso dared to stick real, prosaic objects into the otherwise artificial contexts of his collages. Like makers of *barros* and *imágenes* in Spain, Méliès had been doing this for years. He wrote in his letters and memoirs that he added smoke and water to his magic films in order to heighten their “realism” – thus following and improving on the venerable tradition of conjurors, who strove above all to make the impossible appear palpably real. Elsewhere Méliès wrote that a jet of real water sprayed from a frankly painted whale creates “a striking fidelity to nature” and “the marvelous appearance of reality” (fig. 161).²¹² But in Méliès’s films, these real elements were always juxtaposed with obviously painted two-dimensional props and



161 Georges Méliès, *A Trip to the Moon*, 1902, Anthology Film Archive, New York.

settings; as in later Cubist collages, they appeared in contexts which were aggressively artificial and fantastic, and the real elements emphasized the artificiality around them. (Where makers of *barros* and *imágenes* mixed media within traditional styles, Méliès mixed media within an aggressively modern idiom.)

In a scene from *A Trip to the Moon* (1902, fig. 161), where a small ship is under construction, real smoke shoots out of a small, unambiguously painted, two-dimensional smokestack. For the scene when the spaceship returns from the moon and lands on a seabed, the obviously fake miniature craft is filmed in an aquarium, with real fish swimming about in real water to add a disconcertingly real element to the artificial scene.²¹³

In addition to substituting real objects for painted ones, Méliès repeatedly made works of art come to life before the spectator's eyes in a way that suggested a self-conscious dialogue between apparent art and apparent reality. By doing this, Méliès was exhibiting in his work an ironic stance toward his medium and its mimetic traditions, as Picasso would do some years later. In *A Mysterious Portrait* (1899), Méliès mounts into a large frame a life-sized illusionistic painting of himself. Within seconds, the painted figure starts to move and enter into animated conversation with the "real" Méliès, who gesticulates wildly outside the picture frame (fig. 162). Similarly, in *The Living Playing Cards* (1905), Méliès the magician stands before a rectangular blank panel, resembling a bare canvas, and shows a playing card to the audience. He then flicks a card at the panel, which instantly becomes that card, the nine of spades, on a larger scale. After a burst of fire, the card metamorphoses into a stylized, life-size Queen of Hearts, with a single heart and the word "Judith" painted on it. "Judith" next comes to life, and the name disappears, as the image changes from a generic woman with a specific name to a real person who is Judith. She walks out of the card, bows, and returns to being a painted playing-card, only to dissolve into the image of a King of Clubs, who now comes alive, strides out of the picture, hurls off his costume, and reveals himself to be Méliès (figs. 163 and 164).²¹⁴

Méliès was here adapting visual techniques that had been part of a broader popular culture. By the late nineteenth century, producers of popular dramas and staged

162 Georges Méliès, *A Mysterious Portrait*, 1899, Les Amis de Georges Méliès, Paris.

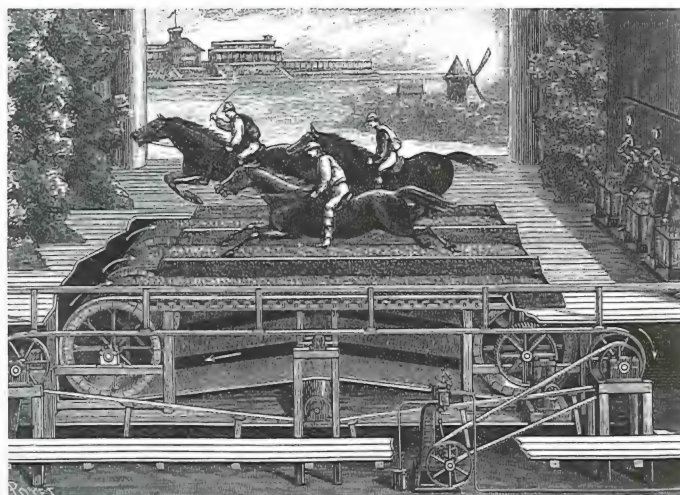


163 (below left) Georges Méliès, *The Living Playing Cards*, 1905, Film Stills Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

164 (below right) Georges Méliès, *The Living Playing Cards*, 1905, Film Stills Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



165 Illustration from G. A. Renel, "La Science au théâtre: Une course de chevaux aux Variétés à Paris," *La Nature*, 2 May 1891, 352.



voyages – like the Maréorama, which were elaborately simulated with moving panoramas – regularly added real falling water, bloody carcasses, galloping horses, howling babies, and even blasts of seaweed odors (fig. 165).²¹⁵ But as directors increasingly strove for realism, and increasingly added more real objects to their productions, other developments conspired to emphasize the artificiality of their creations. When the glare of electricity replaced softer gas lights, the fake and painted quality of the two-dimensional settings behind the real three-dimensional actors and props became more evident than before.²¹⁶ And audiences' expectations changed. Where earlier spectators had willingly colluded with the directors and accepted the illusions, late nineteenth-century spectators and critics complained bitterly of inconsistencies and discrepancies: the “strain when a flesh and blood actor plunged into fake sea”; when a historically precise production of *Henry VIII* was “marred” because the king had kissed a china doll, instead of a real baby (one spectator was so perturbed by this that she actually wrote in and offered the use of her own baby for the duration of the play).²¹⁷ One fake detail destroyed the whole illusion.²¹⁸ Like Méliès, the playwrights attempted to create coherent “real” illusions, but the effects they achieved were ones of disjunction.

In the late nineteenth century, avant-garde artists and sophisticated critics also were enchanted by the possible interjection of real elements into fictive contexts. The important Naturalist turned Symbolist writer and critic Joris-Karl Huysmans was fascinated by Degas's *Fourteen-year-old Dancer* (1881, fig. 166), a girl in her real tutu, real slippers, and hair ribbon. Her body, made of wax, was adorned, in Huysmans's words, with “real skirts, real ribbons, real corsage, real hair,” which reminded him of “certain madonnas whose faces are made up and who are dressed in robes, like those of Christ from the Cathedral of Burgos, whose hair is real hair, whose thorns are real thorns, whose drapery is real fabric.”²¹⁹ With this work, Huysmans asserted:

M[onsieur] Degas has overturned the traditions of sculpture. [. . .] At once refined and barbarous with her ingenious costume, her colored flesh that palpitates, streaked by the straining of muscles, this statuette is the only truly modern attempt that I know of in sculpture. [. . .] I don't see which path this art will follow if it doesn't resolutely reject the study of the antique and the use of marble, stone, or bronze. [. . .] For thousands of years, sculptors have neglected wood, which adapts marvelously, I believe, to an art which is living and real; the painted sculpture of the Middle Ages, the altarpieces of the cathedral of Amiens [. . .] [These works are] so realistic, so human. [. . .] Well, transfer this process, this material to Paris, now put them into the hands of an artist with a sense of the modern like M. Degas.²²⁰

Huysmans continued to luxuriate in the interplay between the real and the artificial, the fabricated, in his most extreme manner, in his exquisite, jewel-like novel, *À Rebours* (1884), where his protagonist Des Esseints exults in fake flowers that look real, and even more, in real flowers that look fake; where a simulated voyage to England in his bathtub is infinitely more satisfying than a real one could ever be.

Regulars of the Chat Noir cabaret exploited such disjunctions between the literally real and the aesthetically artificial for comic ends. Humorists such as Alphonse Allais participated in a series of burlesque exhibitions, *Les Arts incohérents*, whose works, which parodied the Salon in 1882, 1889, and 1893, were “follement hybrides” in character. Allais contributed his *Rabbit* of 1883, a perfectly conventional painting of a couple drinking beer, except for the real rope, which was attached at one end to the painted man's mouth and at the other to a real rabbit nibbling away in a real cage: it illustrated the slang expression “poser un lapin” (to



166 Edgar Degas, *Fourteen-year-old Dancer*, c. 1878–81, wax, fabric, and silk ribbon, 99 cm., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.



167 Anonymous/Présence Panchounette, *Bas-relief*, 1882/1988, silk stocking, laminated support, reconstructed 1988, exhibited at Les Arts incohérents.



stand someone up).²²¹ Langlois replaced fictive elements with real ones in the “correct” place in his portrait of a noted speaker M. de La Pommeraye, upon whose painted face he placed “real eyeglasses and real mustaches,” and next to which he placed a table with sugared water, presumably what La Pommeraye drank as he lectured (1883).²²² In tune with the furor over Le Petomane was Hurey’s *Varied Tune for a Wind Instrument*, which consisted of “some beans in a sheet of newspaper,” and *Street on the Moon*, which Rainaud painted on a chamber pot, 1882.²²³ (Picasso – like his contemporary Freud – was far from alone in his interest in things anal and scatological.)

Henri de Sta made fun of his own military genre by nailing a feathered plume to his painted *Bugler Sounding the Charge* (1883).²²⁴ Alfred Le Petit crafted a self-portrait with “chocolate and licorice juice,” according to the *Arts incohérents* catalogue (1889), the only materials at hand (since he’d been jailed for a pro-Boulangier caricature).²²⁵ Others painted on chamber pots, a man’s back, a live horse; others painted with garlic sausages or red herrings, saliva or snot. In comic honor of a deaf man, Allais exhibited his *Incoherent Funeral March/The Great Sorrows are Mute* (1884), a blank score – such as one Picasso would paste on a collage – with the tempo *molto rigolando*.²²⁶ An anonymous Incohérent nailed up a “bas” (silk stocking) as his *Bas-relief*, again punning and taking literally, now, the name of an artistic genre (1882, fig. 167). Here, the stocking reads as itself, even if it is in an absurd and unexpected context. “Mey-sonnier” exhibited an empty gilded frame, as the *Painting of the Future* (1883). Incohérents exhibited multiple casts of the Venus de Milo: for example, one with a fake beard, as her husband! (1886), another plastered with labels for drinking water, to illustrate the homonym *La Vénus de mille eaux* (1889, fig. 168).²²⁷ These recall Picasso’s memories of his father transforming a classical bust, at home, into an over-the-top Spanish *imagen* of Our Lady of Sorrows.²²⁸

Many of the bizarre materials, supports, and disjunctive additions of *Les Arts incohérents* were even weirder than Picasso’s at his most outrageous Cubist moment. But their actual images, at least those that survive, look rather conventional in style, and lack real visual interest and complexity; the puns tend to be willfully sophmoric, often obvious, puerile. They stood opposed to entrenched art and its institutions, taking the names of artists, genres, and schools to mock them; and in that sense, they are transgressive. But they are jokes: deliciously silly one-note jokes. They stand in striking contrast to Picasso’s visual and hermeneutic complexity. In 1912, for example, he pasted a gingerbread heart onto a Cubist collage and wrote “j’aime Eva” on it; both presumably were scrumptious.²²⁹ Picasso also stood opposed to “Art”; on one level, his works do function as jokes, they roar with savage black humor – but they also are deadly serious, passionate, and fascinating as *images*.

MÉLIÈS TO CUBISM REDUX

Juxtapositions like these, wrote Apollinaire in 1913, constituted a head-on assault against the restrictive canons of Art with a capital A. “I am not afraid of Art,” he wrote, and then referred to earlier artists who had used excrement or blood (elements similar to those still being used in all kinds of popular productions): “One can paint with whatever one wants, with pipes, stamps, postcards or playing-cards, candelabras, pieces of oilcloth, detachable collars, wallpaper, newspaper.”²³⁰

But where Méliès always motivated his insertion of real elements or substances in narrative terms – like Allais with his rabbit or popular producers with their water and babies, or *barros* makers with their real fringe and metal strings, or makers of *imágenes* with their crystal tears and velvet robes – Picasso intentionally used elements that seemed patently ludicrous in an artistic context. Where Méliès preserved famil-

A SUM OF DESTRUCTIONS

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NATASHA STALLER

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Page i Picasso, *Woman (era of "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon")* (detail), 1907, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel.

Frontispiece Picasso, *Self-portrait* (detail), 1915-16, photograph of the artist standing in front of rubble, with *Man Leaning on a Table* in progress. Private collection.

Facing page José Cubero Aranda, *Guitarist*, second half of the 19th century. Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares, Málaga.

Page vi Black lace and tortoise-shell fan (detail), French, 19th century. The Fan Museum, London.

The symbol used throughout the text to divide sections is a detail from fig. 133.

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